

THE
WAY
OF
LIFE

CHARLES HODGE

THE

WAY OF LIFE

BY

CHARLES HODGE,

professor of the theological seminary, princeton, n. j.

written for the american sunday-school union, and

revised by the committee of publication.

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, PHILADELPHIA:

no. 146 chestnut street.

1841

Source:

[https://archive.org/stream/wayoflife00hodg/wayoflife00hodg_djvu
.txt](https://archive.org/stream/wayoflife00hodg/wayoflife00hodg_djvu.txt)

Formatted, modernized, corrected, with add'l references, by

William H. Gross www.onthewing.org *Dec 2020*

PREFACE.

It is one of the clearest principles of divine revelation, that holiness is the fruit of truth; and it is one of the plainest inferences from that principle, that the exhibition of the truth is the best means of promoting holiness. Christians regard the word of God as the only infallible teacher of those truths which relate to the salvation of men. But are the Scriptures really a revelation from God? If they are, what doctrines do they teach? And what influence should those doctrines exert on our heart and life?

The publishing committee of the American Sunday-school Union have long felt the want of a book which should give a plain answer to these questions, and be suitable to place in the hands of intelligent and educated young persons, either to arouse their attention, or to guide their steps in the way of life.

The following work has been prepared at the request of the committee, with the hope that it may in some measure answer the purpose just stated. In a Christian country it might seem unnecessary to raise the question whether the Scriptures are the word of God? But those who have had much intercourse with young men, know that even among those who have been religiously educated, there is more or less skepticism upon this point; and where

there is no absolute skepticism, there is often an impression that the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible is not so decisive as it might, or even should be. Hence it is that the want of faith is seldom felt to be a great sin. It was therefore deemed important that the question, “Why are we bound to believe the Bible to be the word of God?” should be distinctly, though briefly, answered.

The still more comprehensive question, What do the Scriptures teach? is of course considered here only in reference to those great practical doctrines which are essential to evangelical religion, namely, the doctrines of sin, justification, faith, repentance, and holy living.

With regard to the influence which these doctrines should exert upon the heart and life, or in other words, with regard to *religious experience*, reference might be made to the numerous records of the exercises of the people of God, or to what we see daily in His church. However, as the Scriptures themselves not only teach us what the truth is, but also how it operates on an enlightened *conscience* and a believing *heart*, our safest appeal is to them. It is there that we can best learn how we ought to feel and act in view of what the Bible teaches us of sin, of justification, faith, and repentance — since genuine religious experience is simply the accordance of our views and feelings with the truth of God.

If this little book should be instrumental, by the simple exhibition of the truth, of pointing out the way of life to those who are anxious to know what they must believe and what they must experience in order

to be saved, it will answer the design of its preparation and publication.

Contents

PREFACE.

CHAPTER I. THE SCRIPTURES ARE THE WORD OF GOD.

Section - I. The Internal evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures.

Section II. The internal evidence of their divine origin is the proper ground of faith in the Scriptures.

Section III. External evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures. The Testimony of the Church.

Section IV. The argument from Prophecy.

CHAPTER II. SIN.

Section I. All men are sinners. The nature of man, since the fall, is depraved.

Section II. The sins of men are numerous and aggravated.

CHAPTER III. CAUSES OF INDIFFERENCE TO THE CHARGE OF SIN.

Section I. Sin, lack of consideration, striving against the Spirit.

Section II. Sophistical objections against the doctrine of the Bible.

CHAPTER IV. CONVICTION OF SIN.

Section I. Knowledge of sin. Sense of personal ill-desert.

Section II. Insufficiency of our own righteousness and of our own strength.

CHAPTER V. JUSTIFICATION.

Section I. Importance of the doctrine. Explanation of the Scriptural terms relating to it. Justification is not by works.

Section II. The demands of the Law are satisfied by what Christ has done.

Section III. The righteousness of Christ the true ground of our Justification. The practical effects of this doctrine.

CHAPTER VI. FAITH.

Section I. Faith necessary in order for salvation. The nature of saving Faith.

Section II. Faith as connected with justification.

CHAPTER VII. REPENTANCE.

CHAPTER VIII. PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

Section I. The nature and necessity of a public profession of religion.

Section II. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The nature, design and efficacy of these ordinances.

Section III. Obligation to attend upon the Sacraments. Qualifications for the proper discharge of the duty.

CHAPTER IX. HOLY LIVING.

Section I. The nature of true religion.

Section II. The means of sanctification.

Summary

THE WAY OF LIFE

**CHAPTER I. THE
SCRIPTURES ARE THE WORD
OF GOD.**

Section - I. The Internal evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures.

It often happens that those who hear the gospel, doubt whether it is really the word of God. Having been taught from infancy to regard it as a divine revelation, and knowing no sufficient reason for rejecting it, they yield a general assent to its claims. There are times, however, when they would gladly be more fully assured that the Bible is not a cunningly devised fable. They think if that point was absolutely certain, they would at once submit to all the gospel requires.

Such doubts do not arise from any deficiency in the evidence of the divine authority of the Scriptures; nor would they be removed by any increase of that evidence. They have their origin in the state of the heart. The most important of all the evidences of Christianity, can never be properly appreciated unless the heart is right in the sight of God. The same exhibition of truth which produces unwavering conviction in one mind, leaves another in a state of doubt or unbelief. And the same mind often passes rapidly, though rationally, from a state of skepticism to that of faith, without any change in the mere external evidence presented to it.

No amount of mere external evidence can produce genuine faith. The Israelites, who had seen a long succession of wonders in the land of Egypt; who had passed through the divided waters of the Red Sea;

who were daily receiving food from heaven by miracle; who had trembled at the manifestations of the divine majesty on Mount Sinai — *within sight* of that mountain, made a golden calf their God. The men, who saw the miracles of Christ performed almost daily in their presence, cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Hence our Savior said that those who will not hear Moses and the prophets would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. We may confidently conclude, therefore, that those who now do not believe the gospel, would not be persuaded had they seen all the miracles which Christ performed.

It is important that the attention of the doubting should be directed to the fact that their lack of faith is to be attributed to their own moral state, and not to any deficiency in the evidence of the truth. If our gospel is hidden, says the apostle, it is hidden to those who are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, should shine unto them.

There is nothing in the doctrine stated here, that is out of analogy with our daily experience. No truth can be properly apprehended unless there is a harmony between it and the mind to which it is presented. Even abstract or speculative truths are not seen to be true, unless the understanding is duly cultivated to apprehend them. With regard to objects of taste, unless there is a power to perceive the correspondence between them and the standard of beauty, there can be no appreciation of their excellence. And still more obviously in

regard to moral and religious truth, there must be a state of mind suited to their apprehension. If our moral sense were entirely destroyed by sin, we could have no perception of moral distinctions; if it is vitiated, what is true in itself and true in the view of the pure in heart, will not be true to us. A man who has no adequate sense of the evil of sin, cannot believe in the justice of God. If you awaken his conscience, he is convinced at once, without the intervention of any process of proof.

No one can fail to remark that the Bible demands immediate and implicit faith from all who read it. It may lie neglected in the study of the philosopher, or in the chest of the outcast sailor; or it may be given by a missionary still ignorant of the language of the heathen to whom he ministers. The moment it is opened, however, in these or any other circumstances, it utters the same calm voice, *He that believes in the Son has everlasting life; he that does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.* ^{Joh 3:36} If this demand was confined to the educated, we might suppose it to rest on evidence which only the educated are able to appreciate; or if it was made only of those to whom the scriptures are presented by regularly commissioned ministers, we might suppose it rested on their authority; but it is *not* thus confined. It is inseparable from the word itself. It is as imperative when the Bible is read by a child to a company of pagans, as when it is proclaimed in a cathedral. But if this demand of faith goes with the word wherever it goes, it must rest upon evidence contained in the word itself. The demand of faith cannot be more extensive than the exhibition of evidence. Therefore,

unless we restrict the obligation and the benefits of faith to those who are capable of appreciating the external evidence of the Bible, we must admit that it contains its own evidence.

To make the testimony of others to the truth of Christianity, the ground of faith, is inadmissible for two obvious reasons. In the first place, as already intimated, it is not sufficiently extensive. The obligation to believe rests on multitudes to whom that testimony is not addressed. In the second place, it is entirely inadequate. The great mass of men cannot be required to believe, upon the testimony of the learned few, a religion which is to control their conduct in this world, and to decide their destiny in the next. Besides, learned men testify in behalf of the Koran as well as in favor of the Bible. Therefore, that cannot be an adequate ground of faith, which may be urged in support of *error* as well as of *truth*. To require average people to be able to see why the testimony of learned Christians may safely be relied upon, while that of learned Muslims should be rejected, is to require of them a task as severe as the examination of the historical evidences of Christianity. There is, therefore, no way of justifying the universal, immediate and authoritative demand, which the Bible makes on our faith, except by admitting that it contains within itself the proofs of its divine origin.

It may not be easy, or perhaps possible, to give any adequate exhibition of the nature of this proof to those who profess not to see it. However, enough may be said to show that it is a rational and adequate ground for implicit confidence. Every work bears the

impress of its maker. Even among men, it is hard for one man to successfully counterfeit the work of another. Is it wonderful, then, that the works of God should bear the inimitable impress of their Author? Don't the heavens declare his glory? Doesn't the mechanism of an insect as clearly evince the workmanship of God? Why then should it be deemed incredible that His word should contain inherent evidence of its divine origin? If the Bible is the work of God, it must contain the impress of his character, and thereby evince itself to be divine.

It may be objected that we're not competent to judge this evidence. If it requires so much cultivation of the intellect to judge the excellence of human productions, and so accurate an acquaintance with the character of their authors, in order to decide on the genuineness of such productions, who can pretend to a knowledge of God which will enable him to judge what is, or what is not worthy of His hand? This would be a fatal objection if the internal evidence of the scriptures consisted in their intellectual excellence. It loses its force, however, when it is remembered that this excellence is, in great measure, *moral*, and that goodness carries with it its own evidence. To appreciate evidence of this kind requires no great degree of knowledge or refinement. It requires merely right moral feelings. Where these exist, the evidence that goodness is goodness, is immediate and irresistible. It is not because the Bible is written with more than human skill, and that its discrimination of character or its eloquence is beyond the powers of man, that we believe it to be divine. These are matters of which the mass of men are incompetent

judges. The evidence in question is suited to the apprehension of the humblest child of God. It is partly *negative* and partly *positive*.

It consists, in the first place, in the absence of everything incompatible with a divine origin. There is nothing inconsistent with reason, and there is nothing inconsistent with goodness. If the scriptures contained anything contrary to reason or to right moral feeling, then belief in its divine origin would be impossible. Such a belief would involve the ascription of folly or sin to its author. There is more in this *negative* evidence than we are apt to imagine. It can not be urged in behalf of any other book but the Bible, claiming a divine origin. An impassable gulf is thus placed between the scriptures and all apocryphal writings. The claims of the latter are in every instance disproved by the fact that they contain statements which cannot be true.

It is, however, the *positive* internal evidence of a divine origin, which gives power and authority to the claims of the Bible. This evidence consists mainly in its perfect holiness, in the correspondence between all its statements respecting God, man, redemption and a future state, and all our own right judgments, reasonable apprehensions, and personal experience. When the mind is enlightened to see this holiness; when it perceives how exactly the rule of duty prescribed in the word of God agrees with that enforced by conscience; how the account which it gives of human nature coincides with human experience; how fully it meets our whole case; when it feels how powerfully the truths presented there operate to

purify, console, and sustain the soul — then the belief of the scriptures is a necessary consequence. The idea that such a book is a lie and a forgery involves a contradiction. The human mind is so constituted that it cannot refuse its assent to evidence, when clearly perceived. We cannot withhold our confidence from a man whose moral excellence is plainly, variously, and constantly manifested. We cannot see and feel his goodness, and yet believe him to be an impostor or deceiver. In like manner, we cannot see the excellence of the scriptures, and yet believe them to be one enormous falsehood. The Bible claims to be the word of God; it speaks in his name, it assumes his authority. How can these claims be false and yet the Bible be so Holy? How can falsehood be an element of perfect excellence? The only possible way of shaking our confidence in the competent testimony of a man, is to show that he is *not* a good man. If his goodness is admitted, confidence in his word cannot be withheld, and especially when all he says finds its confirmation in our own experience, and commends itself to our conscience and judgment. Thus it is also impossible that we should discern the excellence of the scriptures and feel their correspondence with our experience and necessities, and yet suppose them to be untrue.

When the woman of Samaria reported to her townsmen that Jesus had told her all that she ever did, many of them believed. But after they had themselves listened to his instructions, they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. ^{Joh 4.42} No Christian can be surprised at this

declaration, or think the faith in Christ, founded on what he said, is either irrational or enthusiastic. We can well believe that there was such an ineffable manifestation of goodness in the Redeemer's countenance, manner, and doctrines, as to conciliate entire confidence. Those who were rightly affected could not fail to believe all he said: that he was the Christ, that he came to seek and save those who are lost, to lay down his life for his sheep, and to give himself a ransom for many. Can we doubt that the goodness of the Savior, the elevation, holiness and power of his instructions, their correspondence with our own nature, experience, and wants, would of themselves constitute an adequate ground of faith? *All this we have.* Every man has this, who reads the Bible. There the Savior stands in the majesty of unapproachable excellence. He utters in every hearing ear the words of eternal life; declares his origin, his mission, the design of his advent and death; offers pardon and eternal life to those who come to God through him. There is the most perfect accordance between his claims and his conduct; between his doctrines and what we know and what we need. To disbelieve him, is to believe him to be a deceiver; and to believe this, is to disbelieve our own perceptions. For we know what goodness is; and we know that goodness *cannot* deceive, that God *cannot* lie.

It makes very little difference as to the force of this kind of evidence, whether we personally saw and heard the Savior for ourselves, or whether we read the exhibition of his character and the record of his instructions. For the evidence lies in his goodness and in the nature of his doctrines. It is the same to us who read the Bible, as it was to

those who heard the Savior. There is therefore the same violence done to reason and duty, in our rejecting it, as was offered by those who did not believe because they were not his sheep — that is, because they were insensible to the constraining influence of the grace and truth which were in Him. Does anyone ask, then, how we know that the Bible is not a forgery? Let him consider what such an assumption involves. It supposes either that the authors of the Bible were fools, which we can no more believe than to believe Newton was an idiot; or that they were *wicked*, which no man can believe who knows what goodness is. Therefore, wherever the Bible goes, it carries with it, evidence that is irresistible (when attended to and appreciated), that its authors were neither dupes nor deceivers.

It may be asked, If the Bible contains such clear evidence of its divine origin, why are there so many unbelievers? To this it may be answered that there are two things necessary in order that *evidence* should produce *conviction*. The first is that it should be *attended to*; otherwise it might as well not exist. Of the many millions of people in Christendom, comparatively few give the Scriptures any serious attention. That such persons should have no effective faith, is no more a matter of surprise than that they should be ignorant of what they never learned. The second requisite for the reception of evidence, is that it should be *understood* or really apprehended. If this evidence is addressed to the understanding, there must be enough strength of mind to comprehend its nature and bearing; if addressed to the moral faculty, there must be moral sensibility to appreciate it, or it will be like light shining on the eyes of the blind.

The internal evidence of the scriptures is in a great measure of this latter kind. It consists in their perfect holiness. In proportion to men being corrupt, they are blind to this kind of evidence. It may exist in all its force, and men be insensible to it. Another part of this evidence consists in the accordance between the scriptures and the religious experience of men. Those who don't have the experience, cannot see this accordance. Still another portion of the evidence is made available by the power of God in subduing sin, in purifying the affections, in diffusing peace and joy through the heart. Those who have never felt this power, cannot appreciate this kind of proof. The fact, therefore, that so large a proportion of mankind have no adequate faith in the Scriptures, affords no presumption against the existence of sufficient evidence. This fact is in exact accordance with what the Bible teaches about the moral state of man.

Another objection to the view of the ground of faith given above, is that it leads to enthusiasm (baseless emotionalism), and breaks down the distinction between true and false religion. Every enthusiast, it is said, thinks he sees wonderful excellence in the pretended revelations which he embraces. It is a sufficient answer to this objection to ask, whether the scholar has less faith in the excellence of the great standards of poetry, because the writers of doggerel rhymes have had their admirers? That the sensual, selfish and cruel character of Mohammed appears good in the eyes of a Turk, does not prove him to be an enthusiast who bows with reverence before the supreme excellence of Jesus Christ. That the pagan world saw evidence of the existence of their gods in the

heavens and in the course of nature, does not make him an enthusiast, who recognizes in the works of God the manifestations of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. It is most unreasonable to assume that we must not feel the force of truth and excellence, because others have ascribed these attributes to error and vice. It is not according to the constitution of our nature, that one man should cease to know a thing to be true or good, because others do not see it. The evidence is complete for him, though all the world rejects it.

If it is asked, where the standard is; what criterion of excellence exists by which I am authorized to decide that what I call goodness is really such; the rule is given in the nature of man. We know that benevolence is better than malice, veracity than deceit, humility than pride; and by the same rule we know that Christianity is better than Hinduism, and the blessed Redeemer than the Arabian impostor. No judgment can be more sure than this, no persuasion more intimate, no confidence either more firm or more rational. Therefore, it is no objection against admitting the excellence of the Scriptures as proof of their divine origin, that besotted or deluded men have ascribed excellence to folly and wickedness.

Section II. The internal evidence of their divine origin is the proper ground of faith in the Scriptures.

The Scriptures themselves clearly teach that the faith which they demand is founded upon the authority of God, manifesting itself in them by the excellence and power of the truth which they contain. Throughout, they represent *faith* as the effect and evidence of right moral feelings, and *unbelief* as the result of moral or spiritual blindness. Our Savior said to the Jews, If any man does His will, he will know whether the doctrine is of God. ^{Joh 7.17} Again, He that is of God, hears God's words; therefore you do not hear them because you are not of God. ^{Joh 8.47} On another occasion he said, you don't believe, because you are not my sheep; my sheep hear my voice. ^{Joh 10.26-27} The apostle speaks to the same effect: Hereby you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is of God. ^{1Joh 4.2-3} We are of God. He that knows God, hears us; he that is not of God, does not hear us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. ^{1Joh 4.6} In like manner Paul says, The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. ^{1Cor 2.14} And again, If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost; in whom the god of this world has

blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. But God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ^{2Cor 4.3-6} The doctrine taught in these and similar passages, is that there is in the word of God, and especially in the person and character of Jesus Christ, a clear and wonderful manifestation of the divine glory. The natural man is blind to this manifestation, and therefore does not believe; but those who have the Spirit of God discern this glory, and therefore believe.

It is in accordance with this view that unbelief is represented as so grave a moral offense, and faith as so important a duty. Atheism is everywhere regarded as a crime, because the evidences of the existence of God are everywhere present, above us, around us, and within us. They are addressed to the moral constitution, as well as to the speculative understanding. They cannot be resisted without the same violence to moral obligations, or the authority of moral considerations, that is involved in calling virtue vice, and vice virtue. Hence the Scriptures always speak of unbelief as a sin against God, and the special ground of the condemnation of the world. He that believes in him is not condemned, but he that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ^{Joh 3.18} Who is a liar, but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-Christ who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, does not have the Father. ^{1Joh 2.22-23} Disbelief of the Son as revealed in the Scriptures, is an offense of

the same nature as the denial of God. In both cases, supreme excellence is revealed and disregarded. Much to the same effect the Savior says, He who hates me, hates my Father also. ^{Joh 15.23}

On the other hand, faith is represented as the highest act of obedience, as a moral act of great worth in the sight of God. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. ^{1Joh 5.1} As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name. ^{Joh 1.12} And our Savior told the inquiring Jews, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. ^{Joh 6.29} These representations cannot be reconciled with the assumption that faith is founded on external testimony, which does not address itself to our moral nature; and an assent which has so little concern with moral character. All is plain, however, if we are required to believe in the Son because his glory as of the only begotten of the Father is presented to us; and to receive the Scriptures because they bear the impress of the divine perfections. If *this* is the ground of faith, then unbelief is indeed a crime. It is a refusal to recognize wisdom and holiness, and to acknowledge the manifested excellence of God.

This view of the ground of faith is confirmed by the effects ascribed to that grace. It works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world, it produces peace and joy. It is indeed conceivable that the conviction of truths affecting our interests, however it is produced, should call forth fear, sorrow or joy according to their nature. But it is not conceivable that belief of moral or religious truths, founded on

the testimony of *others*, should control our affections. A man may believe on authority, or on merely rational grounds, that we are under a moral government, and that the law by which we are bound is holy, just, and good; but such a faith will not subdue his opposition. He may be convinced of the existence of God by argument or miracle; but such a faith will not produce *love*. Faith therefore cannot have the effects ascribed to it, unless it is founded on a spiritual apprehension of the *truths* believed.

Hence it is that faith is represented as the *gift* of God. The evidence indeed is presented to all, or there would be no obligation to believe; but men are morally blind, and therefore the eyes of their understanding must be opened that they may understand the things which are freely given to them by God. The apostle therefore says to his believing brethren, You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you do know it, and that no lie is of the truth. The anointing which you have received from him abides in you, and you don't need any man to teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you about all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him. ^{1Joh 2.20, 21, 27} It is taught here, as in other passages already quoted, that believers are the recipients of an influence, an *unction* from the Holy One, which convinces them of the truth, and makes them see and know that it is truth. Hence Paul says, his preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that the faith of his hearers might not stand in the wisdom of

men, but in the power of God; ^{1Cor 2.4-5} that is, that their faith might not be the effect of skillful *reasoning*, but of the spiritual perception and experience of the truth.

All this is confirmed by the constant practice of the inspired teachers. Though they appealed to all kinds of evidence in support of the doctrines which they taught, to signs and wonders, and diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet they by no means rested the obligation to believe either exclusively or mainly upon these external signs. In many cases, faith was demanded by those inspired men who never wrought miracles of any kind, as was the fact in the case of some of the prophets; and still more frequently, it was required of those among whom no such wonders had been performed. When the Jews demanded a sign and the Greeks demanded wisdom, the apostles preached Christ, and him crucified, as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. Their constant endeavor was *by the manifestation of the truth*, to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And if their gospel was hidden, it was hidden to those who are lost.

Therefore, it is plainly the doctrine of the scriptures themselves, that the word of God is to be believed because of the authority or command of God manifesting itself in them, in a manner analogous to the exhibition of His perfections in the works of nature. If, as Paul teaches us, the eternal power and godhead are so clearly manifested by the things that are made, that even the heathen are without excuse; and if their unbelief is ascribed not to the lack of evidence,

but to their not liking to retain God in their knowledge; ^{Rom 1.20, 28} we need not wonder that the far clearer manifestation of the divine perfections made in the scripture, should be the ground of a more imperative command to believe.

It is the experience of true Christians in all ages and nations, that their faith is founded on the spiritual apprehension and experience of the power of the truth. There are multitudes of such Christians who, if asked why they believe the scriptures to be the word of God, might find it difficult to give an answer, whose faith is nevertheless both strong and rational. They are conscious of its grounds, though they may not be able to state them. They have the witness in themselves, ^{Rom 2.15} and know that they believe, not because *others* believe, or because learned men have proved certain facts which establish the truth of Christianity. They believe in Christ for the same reason that they believe in God; and they believe in God because they see His glory and feel his authority and power.

If then, the truth of God contains in its own nature a revelation of divine excellence, the sin of unbelief is a very great sin. Not to have faith in God, when clearly revealed, is the highest offense which a creature can commit against its Creator. To refuse credence to the testimony of God, when conveyed in the manner best adapted to our nature, is to renounce our allegiance to our Creator. To disregard the evidence of truth and excellence in Jesus Christ, is the highest indignity that we can show to truth and excellence. This sin is common, and therefore it is commonly disregarded. Men do not

easily see the turpitude of evils with which they are themselves chargeable. Yet they are quick to discern the faults of those who go beyond them in iniquity. And therefore the man who feels no compunction (remorse) at his own lack of faith in the Son of God, will abhor the one who pronounces the Redeemer a wicked impostor. He will wait for no explanation and will listen to no excuse. The mere fact that a man, acquainted with the Scriptures, is capable of such a judgment respecting the Son of God, is proof of depravity which nothing can deny. Yet how little difference there is between the state of mind which would allow such a judgment, and the state of those who have no faith in the declarations of Christ; who disregard his promises and warnings; who don't feel they are true, and therefore treat them as fables. The lack of faith which men think so lightly of, will therefore be found the most unreasonable, and perhaps the most aggravated of all their sins. It implies an insensibility to the highest kind of evidence, and it involves the rejection of the greatest gift which God has ever offered to man: pardon, holiness, and eternal life.

Section III. External evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures. The Testimony of the Church.

As God has left the heathen to the unauthenticated revelation of himself in his works, and holds them responsible for their unbelief, so he might have left us to the simple revelation of himself in his word. He has been pleased, however, to *confirm* that word by external proofs of the most convincing character, so that we are entirely without excuse.

The testimony of the church is of itself an unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity. The validity of this testimony does not depend on the assumed infallibility of any class of men. It is merely the testimony of an innumerable body of witnesses, under circumstances which preclude the idea of delusion nor deception. For the sake of illustration, take any particular branch of Christ's church, as for example the Lutheran. It now exists in Europe and America. It everywhere possesses the same version of the Scriptures, and the same confession of faith. Its testimony is that it owes its existence as an organized body, to Luther; to whom it ascribes the translation of the Bible, and under whose auspices it professes to have received the Augsburg Confession. It is clearly impossible that these documents could, during the present century, have been

palmed off on these scattered millions of men. They all bear testimony that they received them, as they now are, from the hands of their fathers. As to this point, neither delusion nor deception is conceivable. In the eighteenth century we find this church scarcely less numerous than it is at present. It bore the same testimony then, that it does now. With one voice it declared that their fathers possessed before them the standards of their faith. This testimony is repeated again in the seventeenth, and again in the sixteenth century, till we come to the age of Luther. This testimony, conclusive in itself, is confirmed by all kinds of collateral evidence. Everything in the style, doctrines, and historical references of the standards of the Lutheran church, agrees with the age to which they are referred. The influence of a society holding those doctrines is traceable through the whole of the intervening period. The wars, the treaties, the literary and religious institutions of the period, all to a greater or less degree, received their character from that Society. Therefore, much as men may differ as to Luther's character, as to the wisdom of his conduct or the truth of his doctrines, no sane man has ever questioned the fact that he lived, that he translated the Scriptures, that he organized a new church, and gave his followers the Augsburg confession.

The same series of remarks might be made in reference to the church of England. That extended and powerful body has her Thirty-Nine Articles, her liturgy, and her homilies, which she testifies that she received from the Reformers. This testimony cannot be doubted. At no period of her history could that church either deceive or have

been deceived, as to that point. Her testimony is moreover confirmed by all collateral circumstances. The liturgy, articles, and homilies are in every respect consistent with their reputed origin; and the whole history of England during that period, is interwoven with the history of that church. The consequence is, no man doubts that the English reformers lived, or that they framed the standards of doctrine and worship universally ascribed to them.

When this argument is applied to the whole Christian church, it is no less conclusive. This church now exists in every quarter of the globe, and embraces many millions of disciples. Everywhere it has the same records of its faith; it is everywhere an organized society with religious officers and ordinances. It everywhere testifies that these records and institutions were received from Christ and his apostles. That this vast society did not begin to exist during the present century, is as evident as that the world was not just made. It is no less plain that it did not begin to exist in the eighteenth, the seventeenth, the sixteenth, nor in any other century subsequent to the first in our era. In each succeeding century, we find millions of men, thousands of churches and ministers, uniting their testimony to the fact that they received their sacred writings and institutions from their predecessors, until we come to the age of Christ himself. If the origin of the church ran back beyond the limits of authentic history, so as to leave a gap between its reputed founder and its ascertained existence, this argument would fail; an essential link would be lacking, and the whole extended chain would fall to the ground. But as this is not the case, its testimony touching the historical facts of its

origin, is as irresistible as that of the church of England respecting the origin of its articles and liturgy. The Christian church is traced up to the time of Christ by a mass of evidence which cannot be resisted; so that to deny that Christ lived, and that the church received the sacred writings from his followers, is not merely to reject the testimony of thousands of competent witnesses, but to deny facts which are essential to account for the subsequent history and the existing state of the world. A man might as well profess to believe in the foliage of a tree, but not in its branches and stem.

This testimony of the church as to the facts on which Christianity is founded, is confirmed by all kinds of collateral evidence. The language in which the New Testament is written is precisely that which belonged to the time and place of its origin. It is the language of Jews speaking Greek, and in its peculiarities, it belonged to no other age or people. All the historical allusions are consistent with the known state of the world at that time. The history of the world since the advent of Christ pre-supposes the facts recorded in the New Testament. It is beyond a doubt that the religion taught by a few poor men in Judea, has changed the state of a large part of the world. Paganism has disappeared, a new religion been introduced; laws, customs, institutions and manners have become prevalent, and they all rest upon the facts to which the church bears her testimony.

Beyond all this, the internal character of the scriptures is worthy of the origin ascribed to them; a character which gives the only adequate solution of the revolution which they have effected. When

God said, *Let there be light*, there was light. And when Jesus Christ said, *I am the light of the world*, the light shone. We cannot doubt that it is light; neither can we doubt when it arose, for all before was darkness.

This testimony of the church, thus confirmed by all internal and external proofs, establishes the fact that Christ lived and died, that he founded the Christian church, and that the New Testament was received from his immediate followers. But these facts involve the truth of the gospel as a revelation from God, unless we suppose that Christ and his apostles were deceivers. The evidence against this latter assumption is as strong as the evidence of the existence of the sun. The blind, if they please, may deny that the sun exists, and none but the morally blind can resist the evidence which the New Testament affords of the moral excellence and intellectual sobriety of the sacred writers. If they were trustworthy men, men who we are to believe spoke the truth, then they actually possessed and exercised the miraculous powers to which they laid claim. Christ and his apostles appealed to these powers as an unanswerable proof of their divine mission;¹ and we cannot reject their testimony without denying their integrity.

Section IV. The argument from Prophecy.

The same course of argument which proves that the version of the scriptures and the Augsburg Confession in the possession of the Lutheran church; that the articles, liturgy and homilies in the possession of the church of England; that the New Testament in the possession of the whole Christian world, were derived from the sources to which they are severally referred, proves with equal force that the writings of the Old Testament in the possession of the Jews, are the productions of the ancient prophets. Jews and Christians now have them. They had them a century ago; they had them in the time of Christ. They were then universally acknowledged by the Israelites in Judea and elsewhere. They can be historically traced to centuries before the advent of Christ. Three hundred years before that event, they were translated into the Greek language and widely disseminated. They contain the history, laws, and literature of the people of Judea, whose existence and peculiarities are as well ascertained as those of any people in the world. These writings are essential to account for the known character of that people; for it was in virtue of these sacred books, that they were what they were. Critics have indeed disputed about the particular dates of some of these productions, but no one has had the hardihood to deny that they existed centuries before the birth of Christ. This being admitted, we

have a basis for another argument for the truth of Christianity, which cannot be resisted.

In these ancient writings, preserved in the hands of the open enemies of Christ, we find the advent of a deliverer clearly predicted. Immediately after the apostasy (the fall), it was foretold that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. ^{Gen 3.15} This prediction is the germ of all the subsequent prophecies, which but reveal its manifold meaning. Who the promised seed was to be, and how the power of evil was to be destroyed by him, later predictions gradually revealed. It was first made known that the Redeemer should belong to the race of Shem. ^{Gen 9.26} Then that he should be of the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise was made: In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ^{Gen 18.18} then that he should be of the tribe of Judah of whom it was foretold that, The scepter shall not depart from Judah, or a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the gathering of the people. ^{Gen. 49.10} Subsequently it was revealed that he was to be of the lineage of David; There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ^{Isa 11.1-2}

It was foretold that his advent would be preceded by that of a special messenger. Behold I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom you delight in;

behold, he shall come says the Lord of Hosts. ^{Mal 3.1} The time, the manner, and the place of his birth were all predicted. As to the time, Daniel said, Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to build and restore Jerusalem unto Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks. ^{Dan 9.25} As to the miraculous manner of his birth, Isaiah said, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ^{Isa 7.14} As to the place, Micah said, But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth unto me the one that is to be ruler in Israel. ^{Mic 5.2}

This deliverer was to be a poor man. Behold, O daughter of Zion, your king comes to you, poor, riding upon an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass. ^{Zec 9.9} He was to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, despised and rejected by men, ^{Isa 53.3} and yet *Immanuel*, God with us, ^{Isa 7.14} *Jehovah* our righteousness, ^{Jer 23.6} Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, ^{Isa 9.6} whose goings forth were of old, from the days of eternity. ^{Mic 5.2}

The Redeemer thus predicted was to appear in the character of a prophet or divine teacher. The Lord your God, said Moses, will raise up for you a prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like me; to him you shall hearken. ^{Deu 18.15} Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect in whom my soul delights, I have put my Spirit on him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ^{Isa 42.1} The Spirit of the

Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. ^{Isa 61.1} In that day the deaf will hear the words of the book, the eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity and darkness; the meek also will increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. ^{Isa 29.18-19}

He was also to be a priest. The Lord has sworn and will not repent, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. ^{Psa 110.4} He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne. ^{Zec 6.13}

The regal character of this Redeemer is set forth in almost every page of the prophetic writings. I have anointed (said God in reference to the Messiah) my king on my holy hill of Zion. ^{Psa 2.6} Your throne O God is forever and ever; the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. ^{Psa 45.6-7} Unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth, even forever. ^{Isa 9.6-7}

The characteristics of this kingdom of the Messiah were also clearly predicted. They were to be spiritual, in distinction from the external

and ceremonial character of the former dispensation. Behold the days shall come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, etc. I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ^{Jer 31.31-32} Hence the effusion of the Holy Spirit is so constantly mentioned as attending the advent of the promised Redeemer. In that day I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, etc. ^{Joe 2.28}

Again, this kingdom was not to be confined to the Jews, but was to include all the world. As early as the book of Genesis, it was declared that the obedience of *all nations* would be yielded to Shiloh, and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in Abraham and his seed. God promised the Messiah the heathen for his inheritance, the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. ^{Psa 2.8} It shall come to pass in the last days, said Isaiah, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. ^{Isa 2.2} It is a light thing, said God, that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth. ^{Isa 49.6} In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, and the Gentiles shall seek it. ^{Isa 11.10} I saw in the night visions, said Daniel, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him; and to him

was given dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. ^{Dan 7.13-14} Its progress, however, was to be gradual. The stone cut out of the mountains, without hands, was to break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, *i.e.* all other kingdoms, and become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. ^{Dan 2.45}

Though the prophets describe in such strong language the excellence, glory, and triumph of this Redeemer, they no less distinctly predicted his rejection, sufferings, and death. Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he is despised and rejected by men, we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we did not esteem him. ^{Isa 53.1-3} To him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, and princes also shall worship. ^{Isa 49.7} The people whom he came to redeem, it was foretold, would not only reject him, but betray and sell him for thirty pieces of silver. If you think it good, give my wages, and if not, forbear. So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. The Lord said to me, Throw it to the potter, the goodly price at which I was prized by them. ^{Zec 11.12-13} He was to be grievously persecuted and put to death. He was, said the prophet, taken from prison and from judgment (cut off by an oppressive judgment) and who will declare his generation; for he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of

my people he was stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich at his death. ^{Isa 53.8-9} Even the manner and circumstances of his death were minutely foretold. The assembly of the wicked enclose me; they pierce my hands and my feet. They divide my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture. ^{Psa 22.16, 18} He was not, however, to continue under the power of death. You will not leave my soul in Sheol; nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption. ^{Psa 16.10}

The consequences of the rejection of the Messiah to the Jewish people were also predicted with great distinctness. The children of Israel, it is said, will abide many days without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without teraphim. Afterwards the children of Israel will return and seek the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. ^{Hos 3.4-5} Though the number of the children of Israel are like the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. ^{Rom 9.27} Of the rebellious portion of the nation it was said, I will scatter them among all people, from one end of the earth to the other, and among those nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the soul of your foot have rest; ^{Deu 28.64-65} ... And you shall become an astonishment and proverb, and a by-word among all nations, whither the Lord shall lead you. ^{Deu 28.37} Though thus scattered and afflicted, they were not to be utterly destroyed, for God promised saying, When they are in the land of their enemies I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. ^{Lev 26.44} It was moreover predicted that after a long dispersion they would be

brought to acknowledge their crucified king. I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his first-born. ^{Zec 12.10} This same prophet foretold that after the people had rejected and betrayed the Good Shepherd, they would be given up to the oppression of their enemies; two-thirds would be destroyed; but the residue, after long suffering, would be restored. ^{Zec 13.7, 9}

This representation of the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures, respecting Christ and his kingdom, is in the highest degree inadequate. It would be impossible to give a full exhibition of the subject, without unfolding the whole Old Testament economy. It is not merely in detached predictions, that the former dispensation was prophetic. In its main design, it was prefigurative and preparatory. Indeed, it had its immediate purpose, in preserving the Israelites as a distinct people, in sustaining the true religion, and in exhibiting the divine perfections in His government of the church. But all this was subordinate to its grand purpose of preparing that people and the world, for the advent of Christ, and to be a shadowy representation of the glories of the new dispensation. It was for the double purpose of affording an object of faith and hope to those then living, *and* that the new economy might be better understood, more firmly believed, and more extensively embraced. Detached passages from such a scheme of history and prophecy are like the scattered ruins of an

ancient temple. To form a just judgment, the plan must be viewed as a *whole* as well as in its details. It could then be seen that the history of the Jews was the history of the lineage of Christ. The whole sacrificial ritual was a *prefiguration* of the Lamb of God, who was to bear the sin of the world; the tabernacle and the temple, with their complicated services, were *types* of things spiritual and heavenly; the prophets, who were the teachers and correctors of the people, were sent not merely or principally to foretell temporal deliverances, but mainly to keep the eyes of the people directed upward and onward to the Great Deliverer, and to the final redemption. Detached passages can give no adequate conception of this stupendous scheme of preparation and prophecy, running through thousands of years, and its thousand lines all tending to one common center — the cross of Christ.

The argument from prophecy in support of the truth of Christianity, therefore, can be appreciated only by those who will candidly study the *whole system*. Still, enough has been presented to show that it is impossible to account for the correspondence between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the events recorded in the New, upon any other assumption than that of divine inspiration. We have seen that it was predicted, centuries before the advent of Christ, that a great deliverer would arise, to be born of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, at the village of Bethlehem; that he would be a poor and humble man, and yet worthy of the highest reverence paid to God; that he would be a teacher, priest, and king; that he would be rejected by his own people, persecuted, and put to death; that he

would rise again from the dead; that the Spirit of God would be poured out on his followers, giving them holiness, wisdom, and courage; that true religion, no longer confined to the Jews, would be extended to the Gentiles, and in despite of all opposition, would continue, triumph, and ultimately cover the earth; that the Jews who rejected the Messiah, would be cast off and scattered, and yet preserved; like a river in the ocean, it would be divided but not dissipated, a standing miracle, a fact without a parallel or analogy. Here then is the whole history of Christ and his kingdom, written centuries before his advent. A history full of apparent inconsistencies; a history not written in one age or by one man, but in different ages and by different men, each adding some new fact or characteristic, yet all combining to form one consistent, though apparently contradictory whole.

Admitting, then, what no one denies, the antiquity of the Jewish Scriptures, there is no escape from the conclusion that they were written by divine inspiration, and that Jesus Christ to whom they so plainly refer, is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. To suppose that Christ, knowing these ancient prophecies, set himself, without divine commission, to act in accordance with them, is to suppose impossibilities. It is to suppose that Jesus Christ was a bad man, which no one who reads the New Testament can believe, any more than he can believe that the sun is the blackness of darkness. It is to suppose him to have had control over the actions of others, which no impostor could exert. Many of the most important predictions in reference to Christ were fulfilled by the acts of his

enemies. Did Christ instigate the treachery of Judas, or prompt the priests to pay the traitor thirty pieces of silver? Did he plot with Pilate for his own condemnation? Or so arrange that he would die by a Roman, instead of a Jewish mode of capital infliction? Did he induce the soldiers to divide his garments and cast lots for his vesture, or stipulate with them that none of his bones should be broken? By what possible contrivance could the two great predicted events of the final destruction of the Jewish polity, and the consequent dispersion of the Jews, on the one hand, and the rapid propagation of the new religion among the Gentiles, on the other, have been brought to pass? These events were predicted; their occurrence was beyond the scope of contrivance or imposture. There is no rational answer to this argument from prophecy. The testimony of the Scriptures to the messiahship of Jesus Christ, is the testimony of God. Search the Scriptures, said our Savior himself, for in them you think you have eternal life, and it is they that testify of me. ^{Joh 5.39}

God, then, has been pleased to hedge up the way to infidelity. Men must do violence to all their usual modes of argument; they must believe moral impossibilities and irreconcilable contradictions, and above all they must harden their hearts to the excellence of the Savior, before they can become infidels.

This exposition of the grounds of faith is made in order to show that unbelief is a sin; and to justify the awful declaration of Christ, *He that does not believe, shall be damned.* ^{Mar 16.16} Men flatter themselves that they are not responsible for their faith.

Belief being involuntary, it cannot, it is said, be a matter of praise or blame. This false opinion arises from confounding things that are very different in their nature. Faith differs according to its object and the nature of the evidence on which it is founded. A man believes that two and two are four, or that Napoleon died in St. Helena, and this is neither morally better, nor worse for such a faith. *Disbelief*, in such cases, would indicate insanity, not moral aberration. But no man can believe that virtue is vice, or vice virtue, without being to the last degree depraved. No man can disbelieve in God, especially under the light of revelation, without thereby showing that he is destitute of all right moral and religious sentiments. And no man can disbelieve the record which God has given of his Son, without being blind to the glory of God and the moral excellence of the Savior. He rejects the appropriate testimony of God, conveyed in a manner which proves it to be His testimony.

It is vain, therefore, for any man to hope that he can be innocently destitute of faith in God or of faith in Jesus Christ. If the external world retains such an impression of the hand of God, as to leave those without excuse who refuse to regard it as His work — then surely those who refuse to acknowledge the excellence of His word and the glory of his Son, will not be held guiltless. The evidence which has convinced millions, is before their eyes, and it should convince them. Instead of apologizing, therefore, for their lack of faith, and complaining of the weakness of the evidence — to which nothing but neglect or blindness can render them insensible — let them confess their guilt in not believing; let them humble themselves

before God, and pray that He would open their eyes to see the excellence of His word. They should dismiss their cavils, and be assured that if the Bible doesn't win their faith by its milder glories, it will one day reveal itself, by its terrors to their awakened consciences, to indeed be the word of God.

CHAPTER II. SIN.

Section I. All men are sinners.

The nature of man, since the fall, is depraved.

Since then the Scriptures are undoubtedly the word of God, with what reverence we should receive their divine instructions; with what diligence and humility we should study them; with what confidence we should rely upon the truth of all their declarations; and with what readiness we should obey all their directions! We are especially concerned to learn what they teach with regard to the character of men, the way of salvation, and the rule of duty.

With respect to the first of these points (the character of men), the Bible very clearly teaches that all men are sinners. The apostle Paul not only asserts this truth, but he proves it at length, in reference both to those who live under the light of nature, and those who enjoy the light of revelation. The former, he says, are justly chargeable with impiety and immorality. This is because the perfections of the divine Being, His eternal power and godhead, have been manifested since the creation, by the things which are made. Yet men have not acknowledged their Creator. They neither worshipped him as God, nor were thankful for his mercies, but served the creature more than the Creator. In thus departing from the fountain of all excellence, they departed from excellence itself. Their foolish hearts were

darkened and their corruption manifests itself not only by degrading *idolatry*, but by the various forms of *moral evil* both in heart and life. These sins are committed against the law which is written on every man's heart; ^{Rom 2.15} so that they know that those who do such things are worthy of death, and are therefore without excuse even in their own consciousness.

With regard to those who enjoy a supernatural revelation of the character and requirements of God, the case is still more plain. Instead of rendering to this God, the inward and outward homage which are His due, they neglect his service, and really prefer his creatures to himself. Instead of regulating their conduct by the perfect rule of duty contained in the Scriptures, they constantly dishonor God by breaking that law. Thus the apostle shows that all classes of men, when judged by the light they have severally enjoyed, are found guilty before God. Moreover, this universality of guilt, he says, is confirmed by the clear testimony of the Scriptures, which declare, There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understands; there is none that seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have altogether become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one. ^{Rom 3.10-12}

This language is not used by the Holy Spirit in reference to the men of any one age or country, but in reference to the *human race*. It is intended to describe the moral character of man. It is in this sense that it is quoted and applied by the apostle. And we accordingly find similar declarations in all parts of the Bible, in the New Testament,

as well as in the Old, in the writings of one age, as well as in those of another. And there are no passages of an opposite character; there are none which represent the race as being what God requires, nor any which speak of any member of that race as being free from sin. On the contrary, it is expressly said, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ^{1Joh 1.3} We all offend in many things. ^{Jas 3.2} There is no man that does not sin. ^{1Kng 8.46} All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. ^{Rom 3.23} Hence the Scriptures proceed on the assumption of the universal sinfulness of men. To speak, to act, to walk in the manner of men is, in the language of the Bible, to speak or act *wickedly*. The world is filled with the wicked. This present evil world is the description of *mankind*, from whose character and deserved punishment, it is said to be the design of Christ's death, *to redeem his people*. ^{Gal 1.4} The world cannot hate you, said our Savior to those who refused to be his disciples, but it hates *me*, because I testify of it, that its works are evil. ^{Joh 7.7} They are of the world; therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. ^{1Joh 4.5} We are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. ^{1Joh 5.19}

This however is not a doctrine taught in isolated passages. It is one of those fundamental truths which are taken for granted in almost every page of the Bible. The whole scheme of redemption supposes that man is a fallen being. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. He was announced as the Savior of sinners. His advent and work have no meaning or value except on the assumption that we are guilty, for he came to save his people from their sins; to die, the just

for the unjust; to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Those who have no sin, need no Savior; those who do not deserve death, need no Redeemer. As the doctrine of redemption pervades the Scripture, so does the doctrine of the universal sinfulness of men.

This doctrine is also assumed in all the Scriptural representations of what is necessary for admission into heaven. All men, everywhere, are commanded to repent. ^{Act 17:30} But repentance supposes sin. Every man must be born again, in order to see the kingdom of God; he must become a new creature; he must be renewed after the image of God. Being dead in trespasses and in sins, he must be quickened, or made partaker of a spiritual life. In short, it is the uniform doctrine of the Bible, that all men need both pardon and sanctification in order for their admission to heaven. It therefore teaches that all men are sinners.

The Scriptures moreover teach that the sinfulness of men is deep seated; or consisting in a corruption of the heart, it manifests itself in innumerable forms in the *actions* of the life. All the imaginations of man's heart are only evil continually. ^{Gen 6:5} God says of the human heart that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. ^{Jer 17:9} All men by nature are the children of wrath. ^{Eph 2:3} Therefore the Psalmist says, Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. ^{Psa 51:5}

This corruption of our nature is the ground of the constant reference of everything good in man to the Holy Spirit, and of everything evil, to his own nature. Hence in the language of the Bible, the *natural*

man is a corrupt man; and the *spiritual* man alone is good. Hence too the constant opposition of the terms *flesh* and *spirit*; the former meaning our nature as it is apart from divine influence, and the latter meaning the Holy Spirit, or its immediate effects. To be in the flesh, to walk after the flesh, to mind the things of the flesh, are all Scriptural expressions descriptive of the natural state of men. It is in this sense of the term that Paul says, In my flesh dwells no good thing; ^{Rom 7.18} and that our Savior said, That which is born of the flesh is flesh. ^{Joh 3.6}

This humbling doctrine is, moreover, involved in all the descriptions which the Bible gives of the nature of that moral change which is necessary to salvation. It is no mere outward reformation; it is no assiduous performance of external duties. It is a *regeneration*; being born of the Spirit; a new creation; passing from death to life. It is a change never effected by the *subject* of it (the sinner), but has its source in God. Therefore, the Bible is full of no doctrine more than that which teaches that men are depraved and fallen beings, who have lost the image of God, and who must be created anew in Christ Jesus ^{Eph 2.10} before they can see the kingdom of heaven. ^{Joh 3.3}

These Scriptural representations respecting the universality of sin and the corruption of our nature, are abundantly confirmed by experience and observation. Men may differ as to the extent of their sinfulness, or as to the ill-desert ² of their transgressions, but they cannot be insensible to the fact that they are sinners, or that they have sustained this character as long as they have had any self-

knowledge. As far back as they can go in the history of their being, they find the testimony of conscience against them. As this consciousness of sin is universal, and as it exists as soon as we have any knowledge of ourselves, it proves that we are fallen beings; that we have lost the moral image of God with which our first parents were created. It is a fact, of which every human being is a witness, that our moral nature is such that instead of seeking our happiness in God and holiness, we prefer the creature to the Creator. It would be just as unreasonable to assert that this was the original, proper state of man, as to say our reason was sound if it universally, immediately, and infallibly led us into wrong judgments upon subjects fairly within its competency.

The proof, that man is a depraved being, is as strong as that he is a rational, social, or moral being. He gives no signs of reason at his birth; but he invariably manifests his intellectual nature as soon as he becomes capable of appreciating the objects around him or of expressing the operations of his mind. No one supposes reason to be the result of education, or the effect of circumstances, merely because its operations cannot be detected from the first moment of existence. The uniformity of its manifestation under all circumstances, is regarded as sufficient proof that it is an attribute of our nature.

The same remark may be made respecting the social affections. No one of them is manifested from the beginning of our course in this world; yet the fact that men in all ages and under all circumstances,

evinced a disposition to live in society; that all parents love their children, that all people have more or less sympathy in the joys and sorrows of their fellow men, is proof that these affections are not acquired but original, that they belong to our nature and are characteristic of it.

In like manner, the apostle reasons from the fact that all men perform moral acts and experience the approval or disapproval of conscience, that they have by nature — and not from example, instruction, or any other external influence, but by virtue of their original moral constitution — a law written on their hearts, a sense of right and wrong. But if the uniform occurrence of any moral acts is proof of a moral nature, the uniform occurrence of wrong moral acts is proof of a *corrupt* moral nature. If the universal manifestation of reason and of the social affections, proves man to be by nature a rational and social being, then the universal manifestation of sinful affections proves him to be by nature a sinful being. When we say that anyone is a *bad* man, we mean that the predominant character of his actions proves him to have bad principles or dispositions. And when we say that man's nature is *depraved*, we mean that it is a nature whose moral acts are wrong. And this uniformity of wrong moral action is as much proof of a depraved nature, as the acts of a bad man are proof of the predominance of evil dispositions in his heart. This is the uniform judgment of men, and it is sanctioned by the word of God. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Therefore by their fruits shall you know them.* ^{Mat 7.18, 20} This illustration was used by our

Savior with the express design of teaching that the predominant character of the acts of men, is to be taken as a certain index of the state of the heart; and hence the uniform occurrence of sin in all men is a certain evidence of the corruption of their nature. Indeed, there is no one fact with regard to human nature, which consciousness and observation more fully establish than this: *it is depraved*.

Section II. The sins of men are numerous and aggravated.

The Bible not only teaches that all men are sinners, and that the evil is deeply seated in their hearts, but moreover that their sinfulness is very great. The clearest intimation which a lawgiver can give of his estimate of the evil of transgression, is the penalty which he attaches to the violation of his laws. If he is wise and good, the penalty will be a true index of the real demerit of transgression; and in the case of God, who is infinitely wise and good, the punishment which he denounces against sin, must be an exact criterion of its ill-desert. If we are unable to see that sin really deserves what God has declared to be its proper punishment, it only shows that our judgment differs from his; and it is no matter of surprise that it should thus differ. We cannot know all the reasons which indicate the righteousness of the divine threatenings. We can have no adequate conception of the greatness, goodness, and wisdom of the Being against whom we sin; nor of the evil which sin is suited to produce; nor of the perfect excellence of the law which we transgress. Therefore, that sin appears to us less evil than God declares it to be, is no evidence that it is really undeserving of his wrath and curse.

There is a still more operative cause of our low estimate of the evil of sin. The more depraved a man is, the less capable he is of estimating the heinousness of his transgressions. And the man who in one part

of his career looked at certain crimes with abhorrence, may come at last to regard them with indifference. That we are sinners is therefore a sufficient explanation of the fact that we look at sin in a very different light from that in which it is presented in the word of God. Nothing then can be more reasonable than to bow before the judgment of God, and acknowledge that sin really deserves the punishment which he has declared to be its due. That punishment is so awful, that nothing but a profound reverence for God, and some adequate conception of the evil of sin, can produce a sincere acquiescence in its justice. Yet nothing can be more certain than that this punishment is the proper measure of the ill-desert of sin.

The term commonly employed to designate this punishment is *death*; death not merely of the body, but of the soul; not merely temporal but eternal. It is a comprehensive term, therefore, to express all the evils in this world and the world to come, which are the penal consequences of sin. In this sense, it is to be understood in the threatening made to our first parents: In the day you eat of it you shall surely die; ^{Gen 2.17} and when the prophet says, The soul that sins shall die; ^{Eze 18.4} and when the Apostle says, The wages of sin is death. ^{Rom 6.23} The same general idea is expressed by the word *curse*, As many as are of the law are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law, to do them; ^{Gal 3.10} and also by the word *wrath*. We were by nature the children of wrath. ^{Eph 2.3} The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. ^{Rom 1.18}

These and similar passages teach that sinners are the objects of the divine displeasure, and that this displeasure will certainly be manifested. As God is infinitely good and the fountain of all blessedness, his displeasure must be the greatest of all evils. The Scriptures, however, in order to impress this truth more deeply upon our minds, employ the strongest terms human language affords, to set forth the dreadful import of God's displeasure. Those who do not obey the gospel, it is said, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. ^{2The 1.9} Our Savior says, The wicked shall be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. ^{Mar 9.43-44} At the last great day, he tells us, the judge shall say to those on his left hand, Depart from me you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. ^{Mat 25.41} The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ^{Mat 13.41-42} In the last day, all who are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation; ^{Joh 5.29} or as it is expressed in Daniel 12.2, to shame and everlasting contempt. Whatever explanation may be given of the terms employed in these and many similar passages, there can be no doubt that they are intended to convey the idea of endless and hopeless misery.

Where this misery will arise from, or what it consists in, are questions of minor importance. It is sufficient that the Scriptures teach that the sufferings spoken of here, are inconceivably great in degree, and endless in duration. The most fearful exhibition given of the future state of the impenitent, is that which presents them as reprobates, as abandoned to the unrestrained dominion of evil. The repressing influence of conscience, of a probationary state, of a regard to character, of good example, and above all, of the Holy Spirit — all of these will be withdrawn, and unmingled malignity, impurity and violence will constitute the character and condition of those who finally perish. The wicked are represented as constantly blaspheming God, while they gnaw their tongues with pain. ^{Rev 16.10} The God who pronounces this doom upon sinners, also said, As I live, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked. ^{Eze 33.11} The most fearful of these passages fell from the lips of the Lamb of God, who came to die, that we might not perish, but have eternal life.

It must be remembered that it is not against the chief of sinners that this dreadful punishment is denounced. It is against sin, *one* sin, *any* sin. Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law, to do them. ^{Gal 3.10} Whoever would keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. ^{Jas 2.10} As far as we know, the angels were punished for their first offense. Adam and his race fell by one transgression. Human governments act on the same principle. If a man commits murder, he suffers death for the one offense. If he is guilty of treason, he finds no defense in his freedom from other crimes. Sin is apostasy from God; it breaks our

communion with him, and it is the ruin of the soul. The displeasure of God against sin, and his fixed determination to punish it, are also manifested by the certain connection which he has established between sin and suffering. It is the undeniable tendency of sin to produce misery; and although in this world the good are not always happier than the wicked, this only shows that the present is a state of trial and not of retribution. It affords no evidence to contradict the proof of the purpose of God to punish sin, derived from the obvious and necessary tendency of sin to produce misery. This tendency is as much a law of nature as any other law with which we are acquainted. Men flatter themselves that they will escape the evil consequences of their transgressions, by appealing to the mercy of God, and obtaining a suspension of this law in their behalf. They might as reasonably expect the law of gravitation to be suspended for their convenience. He that sows to the flesh, will reap corruption from the flesh, as certainly as he who sows tares will reap tares. The only link which binds together causes and effects in nature, is the will of God; and that same will, no less clearly revealed, connects suffering with sin. And this is a connection absolutely indissoluble save by the mystery of redemption.

To suspend the operation of a law of nature (such as stopping the sun in its course) is a mere exercise of power. But to save sinners from the curse of the law, required that Christ should be made a curse for us; that he should bear our sins in his own body on the tree; that he should be made sin for us and die, the just for the unjust. It would be a reflection on the wisdom of God to suppose that he would employ

means to accomplish an end more costly than that end required. If our redemption could have been effected by corruptible things, such as silver or gold, or if the blood of bulls or of goats could have taken away sin, who can believe that Christ would have died? The apostle clearly teaches that it is to make the death of Christ vain, to affirm that our salvation could have been secured another way. ^{Gal 2.21} Since, then, the death of Christ was necessary in order for the pardon of sin, it is evident that the evil of sin in the sight of God must be estimated by the dignity of the one who died for our redemption. Here we approach the most mysterious and awful doctrine of the Bible. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him nothing was made that was made. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. ^{Joh 1.1,3,14} God therefore was manifested in the flesh. Being in the form of God, He did not think it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ^{Phi 2.6-8} He then, is the one declared to be the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power; ^{Heb 1.3} whom all the angels are commanded to worship; of whom the Scriptures say, your throne O God is forever and ever; You Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; They shall perish, but you remain; they shall wax old as does a garment; and as a vesture you shall fold them

up, and they shall be changed; but you are the same, and your years shall not fail ^{Heb 1.8-12} — even He who is God over all and blessed forever, ^{Rom 9.5} inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, himself also took part of the same; that through death he might destroy the one who had the power of death, that is the Devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ^{Heb 2.14-15}

It is the doctrine of the Bible, that the infinite and eternal Son of God assumed our nature, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. It is obvious that no severity of mere human suffering; no destroying deluge; no final conflagration, not hell itself can present such a manifestation of the evil of sin and of the justice of God as the cross of his incarnate Son. It declares in language which is heard by the whole intelligent universe, that sin deserves God's wrath and curse, and that none who refuse submission to the appointed method of pardon, can escape its condemnation.

The penalty then, which God has attached to the violation of his law, the certainty with which that penalty is inflicted, the doom of the fallen angels, the consequences of Adam's sin, and above all, the death of Christ, are manifestations of the evil of sin in the estimation of God, which it is the highest infatuation for us to disregard.

However obdurate our hearts maybe in reference to this subject, our reason is not so blind as not to see that our guilt must be exceedingly great. We cannot deny that all the circumstances which aggravate the

heinousness of sin concur in our case. The law which we transgress is perfectly good. It is the law of God; the law of right and reason. It is the expression of the highest excellence; it is suited to our nature, necessary to our perfection and happiness. Opposition to such a law must be in the highest degree, unreasonable and wicked.

This law is enforced not only by its own excellence but by the authority of God. Disregard of this authority is the greatest crime of which a creature is capable. It is rebellion against a being whose right to command is founded on his infinite superiority, his infinite goodness and his absolute propriety in us as his creatures. It is apostasy from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of Satan. There is no middle ground between the two. Everyone is either the servant of God, or the servant of the devil. Holiness is the evidence of our allegiance to our maker; sin is the service of Satan. If we could form any adequate conception of these two kingdoms, of the intrinsic excellence of the one and the absolute evil of the other, of the blessedness attendant on the one and the misery connected with the other; if we could, in short, bring heaven and hell in immediate contrast, we might have some proper view of the guilt of this apostasy from God. It is the natural tendency of our conduct to degrade ourselves and others, to make Eden like Sodom, and to kindle everywhere the fire that never shall be quenched. This cannot be denied, for moral evil is the greatest of all evils and the certain cause of all others. Therefore, he who sins is not only a rebel against God, but a malefactor, an enemy to the highest good of his fellow creatures.

Again, our guilt is great because our sins are exceedingly numerous. It is not merely *outward acts* of unkindness and dishonesty with which we are chargeable; our habitual and characteristic *state of mind* is evil in the sight of God. Our pride, vanity, and indifference to his will and to the welfare of others, our selfishness, our loving the creature more than the Creator, are continuous violations of his law. We have never, in any one moment of our lives, been or done what that law requires us to be and to do. We have never had that delight in the divine perfections, that sense of dependence and obligation, that fixed purpose to do the will and promote the glory of God, which constitute the love which is our first and highest duty. It is in this sense that mankind are said to be totally depraved; they are entirely destitute of supreme love to God. Whatever else they may have, is as nothing while this is lacking. They may be affectionate fathers or kind masters, or dutiful sons and daughters, but they are not obedient children of God; they don't have those feelings towards God which constitute their first and greatest duty, and without which they are always transgressors. The man who is a rebel against his righteous sovereign, and whose heart is full of enmity to His person and government, may be faithful to his associates and kind to his dependents, but he is always and increasingly guilty as it regards his Ruler. Thus we are always sinners; we are at all times and under all circumstances in opposition to God, because we are never what his law requires us to be. If we have never loved him supremely; if we have never made it our governing purpose to do his will; if we have never been properly grateful for all his mercies; if we have never made his glory, but some other and lower object, the end of our

actions — then our lives have been an unbroken series of transgressions. Our sins are not to be numbered by the conscious violations of duty; they are as numerous as the moments of our existence.

If the permanent moral *dispositions* of a man are evil, it must follow that his *acts* of transgression will be past counting up. Every hour there is some work of evil, some wrong thought, some bad feeling, some improper word, or some wicked act, to add to the number of his offenses. The evil exercise of an evil heart is like the ceaseless swinging of the pendulum. The slightest review of life is therefore sufficient to overwhelm us with the conviction of the countless multitude of our transgressions. It is this which constitutes our exceeding sinfulness in the sight of God. While conscience sleeps, or our attention is directed to other subjects, the number of our transgressions grows like the unnoticed pulsations of our heart. It is not until we pause and call ourselves to an account, that we see how many feelings have been wrong; how great is the distance at which we habitually live from God, and how constant is our lack of conformity to his will. It was this that forced the Psalmist to cry, My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up, they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart fails me.

Psa 40.2

Again, we may judge the greatness of our *guilt* before God, by considering the numerous restraints of His truth, providence, and spirit, which we habitually disregard. The simple fact that sin is

wrong, that our conscience condemns it, is a constant and powerful restraint. We cannot avail ourselves of the plea of ignorance, because we have a perfect standard of duty in the law of God. We cannot resist the conviction that His commands are righteous; and yet, despite this conviction, we live in constant disobedience.

We are, moreover, fully aware of the *consequences* of sin. We know the judgment of God that those who do such things are worthy of death, and yet continue our transgressions. We are surprised at the drunkard who indulges his fatal passion in the very presence of ruin; yet we are blind to our own infatuation in continuing to disobey God despite threatened death. We stupidly disregard the certain consequences of our conduct, and awake only in time to see that madness is in our hearts. This insensibility — notwithstanding the occasional admonitions of conscience and the constant warnings of the word of God — constitutes a peculiar aggravation of our guilt.

Nor are we more mindful of the restraining influence of the *love of God*. We disregard the fact that the Being against whom we sin, is He to whom we owe our existence and all our enjoyments; who has carried us in his arms, and crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercies; who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; who has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, but has borne with our provocations, waiting that His goodness might lead us to repentance. We have despised his forbearance, deriving from it a motive to sin, as though He were slack concerning his promises, and would not

accomplish his threatenings; thus treasuring up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Besides all this, we disregard the love of Christ. He came to save us from our sins, and we will not accept his mediation, or reciprocate his love. There stands his cross, mutely eloquent; at once an invitation and a warning. It tells us both of the love and justice of God. It assures us that He who did not spare his own Son, is ready to be gracious. All this we disregard. We count the blood of the covenant, an unholy thing; we act as if it were not the blood of the Son of God, shed for us for the remission of sins. Or it may be, we turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and draw encouragement from the death of Christ to continue in sin. This unbelieving rejection of the Savior involves guilt so peculiarly great, that it is often spoken of as the special ground of the condemnation of the world. He that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will convince the world of sin, because they do not believe in me. If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, how much sorer punishment do you suppose he is thought worthy of, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God!

This great sin of rejecting Jesus Christ as a Savior, it must be remembered, is an often *repeated* and long *continued* sin. It is also one which is chargeable not merely on the openly wicked, but upon those whom the world calls "moral." They too resist the claims of the Son of God; they too refuse his love and reject his offers. It was when all other messengers had failed, that the Lord of the vineyard sent his

Son to his disobedient servants, saying, They will reverence my Son.
Mat 21.37 The guilt of thus rejecting Christ, will never be fully appreciated until the day when He sits on the throne, and the earth and heaven will flee from his face, and no place be found for them.

Besides these restraints from without, we resist the still more powerful influence of the Spirit of God. That Spirit strives with all men; suggesting truth and exciting conscience, expostulating and warning, and drawing men from sin to God. It is from Him that all good thoughts and right purposes proceed. This spirit we quench; we resist his gracious influences, not once or twice, but a thousand times. Though He will not always strive with men, he strives long, and returns after many insulting rejections, repeating the warnings and invitations of mercy. All men are sensible of this divine influence, though they may not be aware of its origin. They don't know from where proceed the serious thoughts, the anxious forebodings, the convictions of truth, the sense of the emptiness of the world, the longing after security and peace of which they are conscious. God sends these admonitions even to those who are most contented with the world, and most happy in their estrangement from Himself. He leaves no man without a witness and a warning. These strivings of the Spirit are not only frequent, but often urgent. Almost every man can look back and see many instances in which an unseen hand was upon him, when a voice, not from man, has sounded in his ears, when feelings to which he was a stranger before, were awakened in his breast, and when he felt the power of the world

to come. The shadow of the Almighty has passed over him, and produced the conviction that God *is*; and that He is an *avenger*.

From a review of what has been said, it is plain that the Scriptures teach not only that all men are sinners, but that their corruption is radical, seated in their hearts, and that it is exceedingly great. The severity of the penalty which God has attached to transgression, the certainty of its infliction, the costliness of the sacrifice by which alone its pardon could be obtained, are all proofs of the evil of sin in the sight of God. The greatness of our personal guilt is plain from the excellence of the law which we have violated; from the authority and goodness of the Being whom we have offended; from the number of our sins; and from the powerful restraints which we have disregarded.

**CHAPTER III. CAUSES OF
INDIFFERENCE TO THE
CHARGE OF SIN.**

Section I. Sin, lack of consideration, striving against the Spirit.

The charge of sin is brought so directly in the word of God against every human being, and is so fully sustained by observation and experience, that the general indifference of men under so weighty an accusation, is a fact which needs explanation. Indifference is no proof of innocence, any more than insensibility to pain is a proof of health. In ordinary cases indeed, a man cannot be ill without knowing it; but his sensations are a very unsafe criterion of the nature or danger of his disease. He may be most free from pain, when most in peril. In like manner, the indifference of men to their own sinfulness affords no presumption that their guilt is not great in the sight, of God. The absence of the immediate consciousness of guilt is no proof of innocence, unless attended by the joyful exercise of all right feelings. When accompanied by indifference to duty and the indulgence of sin, it is evidence of the depth of our depravity. All men assume this to be true in their judgments about those more wicked than themselves. To say about a man, *he is a hardened wretch*, is not the language of extenuation or apology. It is the language of aggravated condemnation. Those who feel this keenly with regard to others — that their indifference is an aggravation of guilt — strangely imagine in their own case, it is proof of comparative innocence.

This insensibility of men, therefore, to the moral turpitude of their character in the sight of God, so far from being an indication of goodness, is the result and evidence of the extent of their corruption. In bodily disease, when the seat of life is attacked, the sensibilities are weakened. So it is in the disease of *sin*; insensibility is one of its symptoms, and it increases with the increase of the evil. Sin produces this effect both by blinding the *mind* and by hardening the *heart*. It obscures our apprehensions of the excellence of God and of his law, and it produces a callousness of feeling, so that what is seen is not regarded. Experience teaches us that a mere change in the state of the mind, produces an immediate and entire change in our apprehensions and feelings in reference to our own sins. The man who at one hour was indifferent, as the most careless of sinners, at the next is filled with astonishment and remorse. Others think his feelings are unreasonable and exaggerated; but he knows them to be rational and even inadequate. This is not the result of any hallucination or mistaken apprehensions of God or of his own character. It is the natural effect of an enlightened mind and of an awakened conscience. The ease and frequency with which the indifference of men to their guilt in the sight of God is destroyed, is itself a proof that their insensibility is *not* based on truth. It is the effect of a darkened understanding and a hardened heart. And though it may increase as sin gains the ascendancy, it vanishes the moment the light and power of truth are let in upon the soul.

Besides this general cause of the indifference of men to the declarations of God regarding their sinfulness, there are others

which ought to be specified. When the prophet contemplated the impenitent unconcern of the people, he exclaimed, *Israel does not know, my people do not consider*. And when God would rouse them to a sense of their guilt, he says, *Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways*. It is this lack of consideration, more than any difficulty in arriving at the truth, which sets men in such opposition to God in their judgments of themselves, and which hardens them in their indifference. This inconsideration is indeed but an effect of the more general cause already referred to; but in its turn it becomes a cause both of ignorance and unconcern. Men learn little upon any subject by intuition; and the knowledge of their own hearts is not to be obtained without painful self-examination. This self-knowledge is the subject to which men generally devote the least attention. They are engrossed by the cares or pleasures of the world. They either float quietly down the stream of life, or are hurried along its troubled course with scarcely an hour given to serious reflection. That under such circumstances men should be ignorant of themselves, and indifferent to their character in the sight of God, is not only natural but unavoidable. It is, however, a lamentable thing that they should make a judgment about themselves — formed without consideration — the ground of their conduct; and confide in it, in opposition to the judgment of God. If they would judge, let them at least consider. If they would act on their own conclusions respecting themselves, let them at least examine and decide deliberately, and not venture everything on a hasty, unconsidered estimate of their character which, it may be, could not stand a moment's inspection, even in their own judgment.

Men, however, are not merely inconsiderate, they often make direct efforts to *suppress* the rising conviction of guilt and danger. The testimony of God against them is so plain; the authority of his law is so obvious; their lack of conformity to it is so glaring, and the influences of the Spirit are so general and frequent, that the conviction of sin can hardly fail to obtrude itself even upon those who in general are the most unconcerned. It is, however, a *painful* conviction; and therefore, instead of being cherished, it is disregarded or suppressed. The mind refuses to dwell on the subject, or to examine the evidence of guilt; it either turns to other objects, or by some act of levity or transgression, grieves away the Spirit of God and hardens itself in unconcern. This is a frequently recurring experience in the history of most men. They have more anxious thoughts than they allow their most intimate friends to suspect; they often mask an aching heart with a smiling face. They have a quick foresight of what such feelings must lead to, if cherished. They see at once that they cannot cultivate such sentiments, and live as they have been accustomed. There are pleasures, and maybe sins, which must be abandoned. There are companions who must be avoided. There is the opposition of friends, the ridicule of associates, the loss of rank to be encountered. All the horrors of a religious life present themselves to the imagination, and frighten the half-awakened from considering their ways, which they know to be but the first step in what appears a long and painful journey. They therefore struggle against their convictions, and in general, they master them. This struggle is sometimes short; at other times, it is protracted and painful. Victory, however, comes at last, and the soul regains its usual unconcern.

Such persons little know what they are doing. They little suspect that they are struggling to elude the grasp of mercy; that they are striving against the Spirit of God, who would draw them from the paths of destruction, and guide them into the way of life.

Section II. Sophistical objections against the doctrine of the Bible.

Another cause of the indifference of men may be found in the objections which they urge against the truth. Such objections indeed are more frequently and effectually urged to perplex the advocates of religion, than to quiet the uneasiness of conscience. Still, men endeavor to impose upon themselves as well as to embarrass others. And the objections referred to, doubtless are often obstacles in the way of the inquirer; or opiates to the consciences of those who desire to be deceived. It is objected that *we are what God made us*; that our character is determined either by our original constitution, or by the circumstances in which we are placed; and therefore we cannot be responsible for it; that inasmuch as neither our belief nor our affections are under the control of the will, we cannot be accountable for either; that it is useless to use *means* to escape the judgment of God, since what will be, will be; that we must wait till God sees fit to change our hearts, since this is declared in Scripture to be *His* work.

It will be observed that these and similar objections relate to the reconciliation of different truths, and not to their separate validity or evidence. The proposition that men are responsible for their moral character, taken by itself, is so capable of demonstration, that all men do in fact believe it. Every man feels it to be true with regard to himself, and he knows it to be true with regard to others. All self-

condemnation and self-approval rest on the consciousness of this truth. All our judgments regarding the moral conduct of others are founded on the same assumption. It is, therefore, one of those truths which is included in the universal consciousness of men, and in all ages and nations, it has been assumed as certain. Men cannot really doubt it, if they would. On the other hand, it is no less certain that our character depends in a measure upon circumstances beyond our control; upon our original constitution, upon education, upon prevalent habits and opinions, upon divine influence, etc. All this is proved by experience and observation. Here then are two facts resting on independent evidence, each certain and each by itself securing general assent. Yet we see men constantly disposed to bring up the one against the other. They argue against their responsibility, because they are dependent; or they argue against their dependence, because they are responsible.

In like manner, the proposition that man is a free agent commands immediate and universal assent, because it is an ultimate fact of consciousness. It can no more be doubted than we can doubt our own existence. However, side by side with this intimate persuasion of our moral liberty, lies the conviction (no less intimate) of our inability to change either our belief or our affections, by merely willing to do so, for which every man knows himself to be responsible, as stated before. Perhaps few men — perhaps no man — can see the harmony of these truths. And yet they *are* truths, and as such they are practically acknowledged by all men.

Again, all experience teaches us that we live in a world of *means* — that knowledge, religion, happiness, are all to be sought in a certain way — and that to neglect the *means*, is to lose the *end*. It is no less true, however, that there is no necessary or certain connection between the means and the end; that God holds the result in his own hands, and He decides the issues according to his sovereign pleasure. In all the ordinary affairs of life, men submit to this arrangement and they don't hesitate to use means, though the end is uncertain and beyond their control. But in religion, they think this uncertainty about the result, is a sufficient excuse for neglect of the means.

It is obvious that this method of reasoning, or rather of cavilling,³ which consists in bringing up one well established truth against another, is unworthy of a rational being. We ought to (and practically, we must) receive every truth on its own evidence. If we cannot reconcile one fact with another, it is because of our ignorance; better instructed men or higher orders of beings may see their perfect harmony. Our lack of such knowledge does not in the least impair the force of the evidence on which they separately rest. In every department of knowledge, the number of irreconcilable truths depends on the progress of the student. Loose matter flies off of revolving bodies, yet everything adheres to the surface of the earth, notwithstanding its rapid revolution; these are irreconcilable facts to one man, though not to another. That two rays of light should produce darkness, or two sounds cause silence, are facts which many may be entirely unable to reconcile with other facts of which they are

certain; while the philosopher sees not only their consistency, but that they are the necessary consequences of the same cause.

If the evidence of the constant revolution of the earth round its axis were presented to a man, it would certainly be unreasonable for him to deny the fact, merely because he could not reconcile it with the stability of everything on the earth's surface. Or if he saw two rays of light produce darkness, must he resist the evidence of his senses because he knows that two candles give more light than one? Men do not commonly act this irrationally in physical investigations. They let each fact stand on its own evidence. They strive to reconcile them, and are happy when they succeed. But they don't get rid of difficulties by denying facts.

If in the department of physical knowledge we are obliged to act on the principle of receiving every fact on its own evidence, even when we're unable to reconcile one with another, isn't it wonderful that this necessity should be imposed on us in those departments of knowledge which are less within the limits of our powers. It is certainly irrational for a man to reject all the evidence of the spirituality of the soul, because he cannot reconcile that doctrine with the fact that a disease of the body disorders the mind. Must I do violence to my nature in denying the *proof of design* afforded by the human body, because I cannot account for the occasional occurrence of deformities in its structure? Must I harden my heart against all the *evidence of the benevolence of God*, which streams upon me in a flood of light from all His works, because I may not know how to

reconcile that benevolence with the existence of evil? Must I deny my free agency, the most intimate of all convictions, because I cannot see the consistency between the freeness of an act, and the certainty of its occurrence? Must I deny that I am a moral being, the very glory of my nature, because I cannot change my character at will?

It is impossible for any man to act, in any department of knowledge, upon the principle on which these cavilling objections to religion are founded. From youth to age, we are obliged to take each fact as it comes, on its own evidence, and reconcile it with other facts as best we may.

The unreasonableness of this method of arguing is further evident from the consideration that if it were universally adopted, it would render all progress in knowledge impossible. It would be tantamount to a resolution to know *nothing* until we know *all things*; for our knowledge at first is confined to isolated facts. To classify and harmonize these facts, is the slow work of the student's life. This is a most benevolent arrangement of providence. It at once stimulates the desire of knowledge, and imposes on us the constant exercise of faith. And it is by virtue of these two important principles of our nature, that all valuable knowledge is obtained. The desire of knowing not merely facts, but their relations and harmony, leads to the constant effort to increase the number of known truths, and to obtain an insight into their nature; and the necessity we are under of believing what we cannot understand, or cannot reconcile, cultivates the habit of *faith* — of faith in evidence, faith in the laws of our

nature, and faith in God. It is thus that our heavenly Father leads us along the paths of knowledge; and the one who refuses to be thus led, must remain in ignorance. God deals with us as children; though as *rational* children. He does not require us to believe without evidence; but he does require us to believe what we cannot understand, and what we cannot reconcile with other parts of knowledge. This necessity of *implicit faith* is not confined to any one department of knowledge, but as already stated, it is constantly demanded with regard to all. The simplest objects in the physical world are surrounded with mysteries. A blade of grass has wonders about it which no philosopher can clear up; no man can tell what fixes the type of each species of plant or animal; by what process the materials of leaf and flower are selected and arranged; where the beautiful tints are borrowed from or how applied; what conducts the silent process of formation of the eye or hand. Everything we see is, even to the most enlightened, the index of something unknown and inscrutable.

If the visible and tangible forms of matter are replete with things past finding out, what may we expect when we turn our eyes on the world of Spirits? Even that little world in our own bosoms, which is pervaded by our own consciousness, the facts of which are most intimately known, is full of wonders — of phenomena we can neither comprehend nor reconcile. Who can understand the secret union of the soul and body, which establishes their reciprocal influence? Why should the emotion of shame suffuse the cheek, or that of fear send the blood to the heart? Why does the soul suffer if the body is

injured? What conception can we form either of matter or mind which is consistent with their mutual influence and communion? The operations of our rational and moral faculties are not less beyond our comprehension. We know certain facts, but cannot understand the *reason* of them, or their consistency. We know that certain feelings follow certain perceptions; the feeling of confidence follows the perception of truth; the feeling of pleasure follows the perception of beauty; the feeling of approval follows the perception of what is morally right. Why these feelings should thus rise, no one can tell. Such are the laws of our being; laws which we did not originate and which we cannot control. That is, we cannot prevent the feeling of confidence or faith attending the perception of truth; nor that of pleasure in the perception of beauty, nor that of approval in the perception of moral rectitude. Yet the consciousness of self-agency mingles with *all* these operations. We are *free* in being *subject to* the laws of our own nature.

The necessity under which we form such judgments or exercise such feelings, produces no sense of bondage. In these involuntary or necessary judgments or feelings, however, our moral character is largely concerned. If two men see an act of cruelty, and the one smiles at it, and the other is indignant, no sophistry can prevent our condemning the former and approving the latter. The feeling excited by the act arises in each spontaneously and by an inward necessity which neither, at the moment, can control. The knowledge of this fact doesn't interfere with our judgment in the case. And that judgment is not merely that the feeling which produced the smile is

an indication of a state of mind, or of previous conduct worthy of disapproval, but that *the feeling itself was wrong*. Moreover, the feeling of disapproval which thus arises spontaneously in our bosoms at this delight in suffering, is itself a *moral* feeling. We should condemn ourselves if this disapproval did not arise, and approve ourselves if it did. There are therefore, in our own breasts, enigmas which we cannot solve, depths which we cannot fathom. Must we then, in order to be rational, deny these facts? Must we maintain that our nature is an illusion and our constitution a falsehood? Shall we, on the one hand, deny that we are subject to the laws of our being, or on the other, that the acts which result from those laws are not our own, do not express our character, nor involve *responsibility*? This happily cannot be done, for faith in our own consciousness is one of the laws of our nature from which we can never effectually emancipate ourselves.

If then there are in our own nature so many things which we cannot comprehend, how can we expect to understand God, to know the reasons and relations of his acts, or to be able to reconcile in all cases his works with his attributes? To do this would require a more thorough knowledge of God than we have of ourselves. It would require a comprehension of his purposes and of the mode in which he accomplishes them. It would require, in short, a knowledge which no creature can possess.

For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so, the things of God no man knows, but the Spirit of

God. ^{1Cor 2.11} We then, who are the least and lowest of God's rational creatures, may well expect to be required to live by faith; to receive as true, on *His* authority, much that we cannot understand and cannot reconcile. However, it is not *blind* belief which is required of us. We are not required to believe anything without adequate evidence; but on the other hand we are not allowed to reject anything simply because we cannot understand it. We must not reject the existence of God, because we cannot comprehend self-existence; we must not deny his eternity, because we cannot conceive of duration without succession; nor his omnipresence, because we cannot see how a being can be equally and entirely in all places at the same time; nor omniscience, because we cannot see how free acts can be foreknown. In like manner, we are not required to believe in God's goodness without abundant evidence of his benevolence; but we are required to believe it, whether we can reconcile it with the existence of evil or not. We are not required to believe in the providence of God without evidence, but our being unable to reconcile his government with our liberty, is no rational ground of unbelief. The same remark might be made with regard to the apostasy of our race and the corruption of our nature; our inability and obligation to obedience; the necessity of divine influence and the use of means. We are required to believe nothing on these or any other subjects, without adequate proof; but we are not allowed to make our ignorance of the relations of these truths, an excuse for either unbelief or disobedience. God gives the glow-worm light enough to see its own path, though not enough to dispel the darkness of the night. Thus too, He shows us where to put

our foot down in each successive step towards heaven, though he may not enable us to comprehend the Almighty unto perfection.

It may be said that we haven't answered even one of all the objections to which reference has so often been made. We have done far better than answer them, if we have made the reader feel the necessity of a humble, trustful spirit towards God. This is the appropriate state of mind for every learner, whether in the school of nature or of Christ. It is that state which the feebleness of our powers and the difficulty of the things to be learned, render not only reasonable but indispensable.

A second impression which we have labored to produce, is that it is one of our primary duties to submit to the truth, to form the purpose and to cherish the habit of yielding the mind to evidence. Faith without evidence is irrational; but unbelief despite the evidence, is not less so. There is a great difference in the temper of different men in relation to this subject. Some resist the truth as long as they can; they cavil at it and oppose it. Others are candid and docile; they are willing to admit the force of proof as far as they perceive it. This is the only way in which true knowledge can be obtained. It is thus that the philosopher is accustomed to act. He carefully interrogates nature for facts; these facts are received; they are classified and harmonized as far as the investigator is able thus to reconcile them. But he rejects none because he cannot make it fit into a system. He waits for further light. It is thus that we are bound to act. We too are called upon to receive every truth upon its own evidence; to

harmonize our knowledge where we can, but to reject nothing simply because of our ignorance of its consistency with other truths.

A third lesson which it is very important for us to learn is, what is *adequate* evidence of truth, and when we are bound to rest *satisfied*. This may be a question which it is difficult to decide; but as far as religion is concerned, the case is sufficiently plain. By the laws of our being, we are imperatively required to confide in the well-ascertained testimony of our senses; to rely upon the veracity of our own consciousness; to receive the unimpeachable testimony of our fellow men; and to abide by those truths which are either matters of intuitive perception, or the necessary conclusions of reason. These are laws of belief impressed upon our constitution by our Creator; and they are therefore the authoritative expressions of His will. To refuse obedience to these laws, then, is not only unreasonable, it is rebellion against God. They are the adamant bars by which he has closed up the way to universal skepticism; and those who break through them, prematurely enter upon the outer darkness. *So then:* we are obliged as rational beings, to receive every truth which rests upon the testimony of our senses, upon the authority of consciousness, the unimpeachable testimony of witnesses, or the intuitive perceptions or necessary deductions of reason. Whether we can systematize and reconcile all the truths thus arrived at, is a very different question. Our obligation to receive them does not rest upon this power, but upon the evidence afforded for each separate truth. Our consciousness tells us that we are sinners; it also informs us of our helplessness. We may fight against one or the other of these

truths, like the ocean chafes against the rocks; they cannot be moved. When the mind has been drugged with false philosophy, it may disbelieve for a time. But the infidelity lasts no longer than the intoxication. As soon as the man is sober, the truth re-appears in greater clearness and authority than ever. Therefore, nothing can be eventually gained by resistance to the truth; and it is the part of wisdom to submit at once to the laws of belief which God has impressed upon our nature.

Besides this rule of faith (if it may be called that) which God has given us in the constitution of our nature, we have his word and his providence, authenticated by all kinds of adequate testimony. There can be no higher ground of faith than the authority of God. Even confidence in the testimony of our senses or the dictates of consciousness, resolves itself into confidence in the veracity of God by whom the laws of nature have been established. Any truth, therefore, which is sustained by a well-authenticated revelation of God, or upon the actual dispensations of his providence, must be considered as fully established; and every objection which can be shown to militate against either, must be considered as fully answered. It was thus that the sacred writers answered objections. It was enough for them that God asserted any truth, or actually exercised any prerogative. Any further vindication, they deemed unnecessary. We should act on the same principle and quietly submit to all that God says and to all that he does. Some men complainingly ask, Why were we born? Surely it is enough that they *are* born. The fact cannot be denied, whether they can see the wisdom and design

of their creation or not. Or they ask, Why were we born in a state of sin, or in a world in which sin is universal and inevitable? To human reason, this may be a question that is impossible to answer. But as the fact stares us in face, is there any use in denying it? It is further asked, If we are born in such a state that, either from our *nature* or *circumstances*, sin is inevitable and universal, then how can we be responsible? Whatever difficulty there may be in showing *how* we are responsible, there is no doubt as to the *fact* of it. We feel ourselves to be responsible, and can no more free ourselves of the conviction than we can get rid of the consciousness of existence. Where then is the wisdom of quarrelling with facts? Why should we spend our lives like a wild beast in a cage, forever chafing against the bars of its prison, which nevertheless remain! Let us learn to submit to what we see to be true; let us remember that our knowledge does not embrace all truth; that things may be perfectly consistent with each other and with the attributes of God, though we may not see how. Our knowledge will continually increase; and those facts which give us the most difficulty will be found to be so analogous to others, the justice of which we are able to recognize, that if we never come to see all things in their *harmony*, we shall at least see that they must be *consistent*, being parts of that system which is everywhere luminous with the manifestations of the wisdom and love of God. Let us remember that we are children, the children of God, that He gives us abundant evidence of everything which he requires us to believe, though he renders it necessary for us to exercise confidence in him, to feel assured that what he says is true, and that what He does is

right; that though clouds and darkness may be round about Him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

The last general remark to be made in reference to these objections, is that they are almost always dishonestly urged; that is, they are urged with an inward conviction of their fallacy. As in many cases we know things to be true which we cannot prove, so we often know objections are fallacious which we cannot answer. If a man denies his own existence, or the distinction between right and wrong, it is in vain to argue with him. There can be nothing plainer than the truth denied; and therefore, there can be no means of proving it. So also, if to escape the charge of guilt, he denies his responsibility, he denies a fact of consciousness, which cannot possibly be made plainer. Or if he pleads his inability as an excuse for not repenting and obeying God, he presents a plea which he knows has no validity; he knows that however real this inability may be, it is of such a nature as to afford no excuse for his continuing in sin, because the conviction of its reality co-exists in his own consciousness, with a sense of guilt. It is a plea, therefore, that does not avail at the bar of his own conscience, and he knows that it will not avail at the bar of God. In like manner, when men object to the strictness of the divine law, they do so with the inward persuasion of the righteousness of that law. Its requirements commend themselves to their conscience. They know that as God is infinitely wise and good, it is right that we should regard Him with supreme affection, and implicitly submit to all his directions.

All such cavilling objections, men know to be false. God has not left himself without a witness. His voice has an authority which we cannot resist. When he tells us we are sinners, we know it to be true. When he tells us that we are worthy of death, we know it to be a righteous judgment. When he tells us that we have no strength to save ourselves and that our salvation depends upon his will, we know it to be even so. Whenever he reveals himself, our mouths are shut — not merely from fear, but from an intimate persuasion of the justice of all his ways. It is then both foolish and wicked to urge objections against the truth, which we ourselves know to be futile, whether this is done with a view to perplex our fellow men, or in a vain endeavor to silence the accusations of conscience and the word of God.

Such is the power of truth that neither the natural insensibility of the heart, nor the lack of consideration, nor the direct efforts which men make to suppress serious thoughts, nor the whole array of sophistical objections, can avail to counteract the secret conviction in the breast of the impenitent, that they are on the road to eternal death. This conviction is often very weak. When men are engrossed in the concerns of this world, it is overlooked. Still, it is *there*; and time and again it wakes up to trouble them. The suggestion that God is merciful, and perhaps will not be strict to mark iniquity, will not quiet this uneasy apprehension. This suggestion, therefore, avails but little. It is counteracted by the sense of ill-desert, by the irrepressible conviction that those who commit sin are worthy of death — by the plain declarations of Scripture, and by the evidence which even providence affords that God is righteous. The vague apprehension of

coming wrath, therefore, in despite of all their efforts, still haunts the path of the impenitent. It chills their joys and gathers strength whenever the world seems to be receding from their grasp.

Most men are driven to enter the plea of guilty before the bar of conscience, and content themselves with praying for a delay of judgment. They are forced to admit that they are not fit to die in their present state; that they are bound to comply with the requirement of the gospel — but they plead for time. *Go your way for now; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for you.* Conscience is more easily deluded by *this* plea, which seems to admit its demands, than by any other. It is therefore the most dangerous snare for souls. Men do not reflect on the wickedness of pleading with God for liberty to continue a little longer in sin; to be allowed to break His commandments, to disregard his mercies, to slight his love, and to injure the cause of truth and righteousness. They don't think of the indignation with which they would reject such a plea from an ungrateful and disobedient son or servant. Nor do they remember that every such act of procrastination is a great aggravation of their guilt, as it supposes a consciousness of the evil of their present course, and a recognition of the righteousness of all the demands of God. Nor do they consider that the difficulties which beset the path of their return to God, are all increased by delay. If the work of repentance is irksome today, it will be more irksome tomorrow. If the heart is now hard, it will become yet harder by neglect. If the power of sin is now too strong for us to resist, it will become still stronger by indulgence. If the motives to repentance now fail to

secure obedience, they will act with constantly increasing disadvantage hereafter. If God is justly displeased now, he will be more and more displeased by continued disobedience. Every day's procrastination therefore increases, at a fearful rate, the probability of our final perdition.

CHAPTER IV. CONVICTION OF SIN.

Section I. Knowledge of sin. Sense of personal ill-desert.

Though men are generally so indifferent to their sinfulness and danger, it often pleases God to arouse their attention, and to produce a deep conviction of the truth of all that the Bible teaches on these subjects. The effects of such conviction are very various, because they are modified by the temperament, the knowledge, the circumstances and concomitant exercises of those who experience it. A sentence of death, if passed on a hundred men, would probably affect no two of them alike. The mind of one might fasten particularly on the turpitude ⁴ of his crime; another on the disgrace which he had incurred; a third on the sufferings of his friends on his account; a fourth on the horrors of death, or the fearfulness of appearing before God. All these and many other views, in endless combination, might operate with different degrees of force on each; and the result be still further modified by their physical and moral temperament, their knowledge, and previous history. The endless diversity, therefore, in the experience of men when convinced of sin, is what might be expected; and shows it is impossible to give any description of such an experience that would be applicable to all cases. It will be sufficient to briefly state what the Scriptures teach is necessary on this subject.

There must be some correct knowledge of sin. It's clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures, confirmed by universal experience, that men naturally are exceedingly blind on this subject. They have very inadequate ideas of the nature of this evil. Being ignorant of the holiness of God, they don't regard the opposition of sin to His nature, so much as its effects on themselves, or on society. They judge it by a wrong standard; and hence all their judgments respecting it are either erroneous or defective. Its real nature, or the real source of its evil, in great measure escapes their notice. Hence a thousand things which are unquestionably sinful, they in general overlook or disregard. What they consider isn't so much the state of the heart towards God, as the temper and deportment of one man towards his fellow men. And therefore they often regard themselves and others as really good, though they may be destitute of even one right sentiment towards their Maker. Being ignorant of the true nature of sin, they have no conception of the number of their transgressions. They are disposed to estimate them by the number of positive or overt acts of disobedience to the moral law — overlooking the habitual state of the heart, the uniform lack of love, faith, and due reverence towards God. Nor do they have any adequate idea of the guilt of sin. To them, as it exists in themselves, it is comparatively a trifle. Any great concern about it, they consider unreasonable; and when manifested by others, hypocritical or fanatical. There is a deceitfulness in sin by which men are deluded so as to form wrong judgments as to its nature, extent, turpitude and power. This delusion must be dispelled. The eyes must be opened to see sin as it is represented in the word of God, as an exceedingly evil and bitter

thing, as extending not merely to overt acts or outbreaks of passion, but as deeply seated in the heart, polluting the streams of life at the fountain; as really deserving the punishment which God has denounced against it; and as having such a hold on the inward principles of our nature, that its power cannot be broken by any ordinary exertion.

This insight into the Scriptural account of sin is attended with a firm conviction of its truth; and this conviction is inseparable from the kind of knowledge of which we are now speaking; because it is in fact nothing but an insight into the nature of the Scriptural doctrine as true, or as accordant with the moral nature which God has given us. Men therefore are not thus convinced either by argument or authority. They see and feel what God has declared concerning the nature and evil of sin to be true. Hence the conviction is irresistible even when most unwelcome. We often see it taking sudden and powerful possession of the soul, when conscience is roused from its torpor, and assents to the declarations of God with a force that is not to be resisted. When Paul reasoned about righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, Felix trembled. The truth, externally presented, found such a response in the bosom of the Roman governor, that he could not disbelieve. This is in accordance with daily experience. The cavils of men against the unreasonable strictness of the divine law and their objections against the justice of its awful penalty vanish in a moment, when their eyes are open to see what the law and its violation really are. And so long as the perception lasts, the conviction remains. If they can succeed in

shutting out the light, and in quieting a conscience that's been roused by its intrusion, they become as skeptical as ever on all these subjects. In many cases, they succeed in closing their eyes to what they hate to see; and they regain their former unbelief. But often this is found to be impossible, especially on the near approach of death, or when God is about to pluck them as brands from the burning. Probably a day doesn't pass without some illustration of the truth of these remarks. Men who have long lived in unbelief or carelessness are arrested by an influence which they can neither understand nor resist. There is no new revelation, no novel arguments, no conscious process of reasoning. There is simply a perception of the truth of the declarations of God concerning sin. Against the conviction arising from this, their old cavils, and the arguments and assurances of their friends, have no effect. They don't reach the point. They are addressed to something quite foreign to the ground of the conviction, and therefore they don't affect it. Though this persuasion of the truth of the Scriptural doctrine respecting sin is often temporary, it forms an essential part of those convictions which are abiding and saving. Men may have this persuasion, who never accept the offers of salvation; but those who do accept them cannot be entirely without it.

This knowledge of sin, which enters so essentially into the nature of true conviction, is derived from the law; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ^{Rom 3.20} I would not have known sin, said the apostle, but by the law. For without the law, sin was dead. I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived

and I died. ^{Rom 7.9} It is clearly taught in these and similar passages, that the apostle was at one time ignorant of the extent and spirituality of the law, and consequently ignorant of sin. He thought himself to be as good as could reasonably be expected. He was contented and at ease. But when the law was revealed to him in its *true* character, his views of sin were at once changed. He came to know what it was, and to feel its power over him. A thousand things which before had appeared indifferent or trivial, he now saw to be aggravated offenses; and especially the secret, deep-seated evil of his heart, which had escaped his knowledge or regard, was detected as the great source of all other sin.

The law is the means of communicating this knowledge, because it is an expression of the perfect holiness of God. So long as men judge themselves *by* themselves, and compare themselves *among* themselves, they will be in the dark as to their true character. It is not until they judge themselves by the perfect standard of duty contained in the law of God, that they can have any proper knowledge of their *real* character. *It is in His light that we see light*. It is only when we look away from the sinful beings by whom we are surrounded, and feel ourselves in the presence of the perfect purity of God, that we are sensible of the extent of our departure from the standard of excellence. It is therefore both the doctrine of the Bible and the experience of the people of God, that the knowledge of sin arises from the apprehension of the divine excellence as revealed in the law. No doubt there is great diversity in the experience of Christians as to the clearness of their views on this subject. In some cases everything

is seen as through a glass, darkly; in others there is such a discovery of the infinite excellence of God and of his law, as to fill the mind with great reverence and self-abasement. Sometimes this knowledge steals upon the mind as imperceptibly as the opening day; at others, in a moment, the truth stands disclosed in all its awful purity. The man who one hour was unconcerned, the next is full of astonishment at his former blindness. He wonders how it was possible he could be so ignorant of the excellence of God and the perfection of his law. He is amazed at his infatuation in thinking that he was to be judged by the common standard of man's judgment, by the low demands of the world or of his associates. He now sees that the rule by which he is to be tried is infinitely pure, and cannot overlook the least transgression. We are nowhere taught what degree of clearness of this knowledge is necessary to salvation. We only know that men must have such a knowledge of sin as to bring their judgments respecting it into accordance with the declarations of God. Instead of that perpetual opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures respecting the evil and extent of sin, which men so generally evince, they must be brought to acquiesce in the truth and justice of all God's representations on the subject.

Besides this knowledge of sin and assent to the Scriptural doctrine on the subject, there is, in genuine conviction, a sense of *personal unworthiness*. This perhaps has been in a measure anticipated, but it deserves particular consideration. Holy beings may have a clear perception of the truth as presented in the word of God respecting the nature of sin, but they can have no sense of moral turpitude. And

among men, there is often a clear understanding of the doctrine on this subject, and a general assent to its truth, without any adequate conviction that what the Bible says of sinners is applicable *to us*. It isn't enough, therefore, that we should know and believe what the Scriptures teach respecting sin; we must feel that it is all true *as it regards ourselves*. There must be an assent of our own consciousness to the declaration that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. ^{Rom 7.18} This sense of personal unworthiness is the principal part of conviction of sin. It is the opposite of that false notion of our own excellence, which we are so prone to indulge. It destroys our self-complacency and eradicates the disposition to justify ourselves, or extenuate our guilt.

The most certain concomitant of this sense of moral turpitude in the sight of God, is *shame*. O my God, cried Ezra under a sense of sin, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to you my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass has grown up to the heavens. ^{Ezr 9.6} Daniel said: O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us, shame of face, as at this day. ^{Dan 9.7} I have heard of you, said Job, with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you, and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. ^{Job 42.5} And in another place he says: Behold I am vile, what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. ^{Job 40.4} The same feeling is expressed by the Psalmist, when he says, My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I cannot look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore, my heart fails me. ^{Pa 40.12} The same emotion

filled the bosom of the Publican, when he would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but struck upon his breast and said, God be merciful to me a sinner. ^{Luk 18.13}

With this sense of unworthiness are mingled, in a greater or less degree, the feelings of *contrition and remorse*; sorrow for our innumerable offenses, and bitter self-condemnation. To these are often added perplexity and fear of the wrath of God; a dread lest our sins can never be forgiven, lest our defilement can never be washed away. No suffering in this world can exceed what the soul often endures under the pressure of these feelings. It cries out with Paul, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ^{Rom 7.24} Or it is forced to say with Job, The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison of which drinks up my spirits; and the terrors of God set themselves in array against me. ^{Job 6.4} Or with Heman, While I suffer your terrors I am distracted; your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off. ^{Psa 88.15-16}

With the inspired record of the experience of God's people on this subject, we find the language of his more eminent servants in later times remarkably coincident. The Confessions of Augustine are full of similar expressions of humiliation and anguish under a sense of sin. And even the stout heart of Luther was so broken by his inward sufferings, that his life was long a burden almost too heavy for him to bear. But while it is no doubt true that it is the natural tendency of correct apprehensions of our real character in the sight of God to produce these strong emotions of humiliation and sorrow; and while

it is no less true that those who have made the most eminent attainments in holiness, have generally had the largest share of these inward trials, it is not to be supposed that they are necessary to the character of a Christian. On the contrary, a believing apprehension of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, while it would not prevent humiliation and penitential sorrow on account of sin, would effectually extract the bitterness of remorse and fear from the cup of repentance. There is no true religion in these terrors and fearful apprehensions. The death-bed of the impenitent often exhibits this sense of guilt, humiliation, remorse, dread of punishment and other indications of an enlightened and awakened conscience. And in many cases, those who have suffered all this distress, lose their serious impressions and sink into their former carelessness. Therefore, though the pain of remorse and dread of the wrath of God often attend conviction of sin, they do not constitute it.

In many cases, there is little of this agitation of feeling. Perhaps the most frequent form of religious experience on this subject is a deep distress on account of the *lack* of an excitement of feeling corresponding with the judgment of the understanding and conscience. The common complaint with many is that they *cannot feel*; that their hearts are like ice; that the knowledge and perception of their ingratitude and disobedience produce little or no emotion. Such persons would gladly exchange their insensibility for the keenest anguish; their constant prayer is that God would take from them their heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh. This form of experience is just as consistent with the nature of conviction of sin as

the other. All that is necessary is the testimony of conscience to the justice of the divine representations of our character and conduct; the consciousness and acknowledgment that we are what God declares us to be. Where this judgment of the conscience, or this sense of personal unworthiness exists, leading the sinner to lay his hand upon his mouth in the presence of God, and to bow at his feet as undeserving of mercy, there, as far as this point is concerned, is genuine conviction.

This state of mind may be produced in very different ways. Sometimes it is the result of a calm review of life — a comparison of the habitual state of the heart and general course of our conduct, with the law of God. Sometimes, some one offense more than commonly aggravated, seizes upon the conscience; some broken vow, some neglected call, some open sin, is made the means of revealing the man to himself. Whatever may be the particular occasion, the mind is led to fix itself on its responsibility to God and the conviction of its guilt becomes settled and confirmed. *This is necessary to the sinner's return to God.* So long as he thinks himself whole and healthy, he will not apply to the physician. So long as he regards his sins as either few or trivial, he will feel no concern for pardon or sanctification. But when his eyes are opened and his conscience aroused, he feels that his case demands immediate and earnest attention; he knows himself to be unprepared to meet his God, that his sins are so great that they cannot be forgiven unless he obtains an interest ⁵ in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Every

true Christian is in some way brought to this conviction and acknowledgment of personal ill-desert in the sight of God.

In the third place, *conviction of sin includes a conviction of our condemnation before God*. A sense of sin is a sense of unworthiness; and a sense of unworthiness involves a sense of just exposure to the divine displeasure. It may be proper to notice three very distinct states of mind in reference to this subject. It is very obvious that our views of the punishment due to sin, must depend on our views of sin itself. If we have inadequate apprehensions of the evil of sin, we will have inadequate apprehensions of the punishment which it deserves. Hence in the great majority of men, there is a secret disbelief of the Scriptural representations on this subject. They cannot reconcile the declarations of God respecting the doom of the impenitent, with their views of his justice and mercy; and therefore they cannot believe them. And it very often happens that the sense of sin which serious people experience, is insufficient to overcome this unbelief; or at least, the strong opposition of the heart to what the Bible teaches on this subject. They feel that they are sinners; they feel that they deserve the displeasure of God; but they still experience a secret revolting against the dreadful denunciations of the Scriptures against all sin.

“To submit to the condemning power of the holy law of God,” says Dr. Milner, “is a hard matter, a very hard matter indeed to do this thoroughly. My understanding has shown me for many years, that this was the touchstone of a sound conversion; and I have been busy

enough in noting the defect of it in others; but as to myself, if I have got on at all in this respect, it is very lately indeed. The heart is sadly deceitful here; for, with Christ's salvation before one's eye, one may easily fancy that God is just and equitable in condemning sinners; when, if you put the case, only for a moment, to your own heart seriously, as a thing likely to happen, the heart will rise against such a dispensation; perhaps indeed with a smothered sort of opposition and dislike, but which is very steady and determined. Nothing less than the Holy Ghost himself can cure this, by showing us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” [6](#)

That the soul should revolt at the idea of its own misery, is the law of our nature, and can never be eradicated. This is not the sentiment which it is intended to condemn, but the opposition of the heart to the truth and justice of God's declarations respecting the punishment due to sin. It is this opposition, this disposition to criminate God, to regard him as unjustly severe, which ought to be subdued; because it shows that our hearts are not in harmony with his word; that we regard as unjust what He pronounces just. All experience shows that this is a very common state of mind. And its existence proves that our views of the ill-desert of sin have not been sufficiently clear to bring us to submit to the plan which God has revealed for our redemption from deserved condemnation.

The opposite extreme to this, is the feeling that our sins are so great that they cannot be forgiven. This is no uncommon persuasion. When there is a clear discovery of the evil of sin, with no concomitant

apprehension of the true plan of salvation, despair is the natural result. The judgment of conscience is known to be true when it pronounces our sins to be deserving of death. And unless the soul sees how God can be *just* and yet *justify* the sinner, it cannot hope for mercy. Nothing can be more pitiable than a soul in this condition. Its views of the justice of God and of the evil of sin, are neither false nor exaggerated. It is their truth which gives them power, and which renders futile the soothing assurances of friends that God will not be so strict in marking iniquity, or that the sinner's guilt is not so great as he imagines. An enlightened conscience cannot be thus appeased; and if such are the only sources of consolation to which it has access, it must despair.

In a Christian country, however, the knowledge of the plan of salvation is so generally diffused, that it seldom fails, even when imperfectly understood, to calm or restrain the apprehensions of God's displeasure. It is known that God can pardon sin, that there is salvation at least for some, for some have been saved. And although the sinner is often disposed to think that his is an excepted case, or that there is some peculiar aggravation in his guilt, which puts him beyond the reach of mercy, yet he cannot be sure that this is the case. And in his darkest hours, the belief in the possibility of salvation is not entirely destroyed.

Between these extremes of inimical opposition to the truth of God — as to the just exposure of the sinner to condemnation, and the despair of mercy which arises from unbelief — lies genuine

conviction of ill-desert. If religious experience is the conformity of our judgments and feelings to the truths that are revealed in the Scriptures, and if it is there revealed that the wages of sin is death, then our judgment and feeling must assent to that truth; we must admit that such is the just desert of sin and of our sins. There must be no disposition to complain of the extent or severity of the law; but such a sense of ill-desert in the sight of God as will lead us to lie at His feet, sensible that he can neither do nor threaten wrong, and that forgiveness must be a matter entirely of grace. It is obvious that there can be no intelligent acceptance of Christ as a savior without this conviction of our exposure to condemnation; and there can be no conviction of such exposure, without a perception of the justice of the penalty of the law. It is to be remembered, however, that there are many things involved in Christian experience, which may not be the object of distinct attention. It may therefore well happen that many pass from death unto life, without any lively apprehension of the wrath of God, or any very distinct impression that all that He has threatened against sin might be justly inflicted upon them. Their attention may have been arrested and their hearts moved by the exhibition of the love of God in Christ, and they may have been conscious at the time, of little more than a cordial acquiescence in the gospel, and the desire and purpose to live for the service of God. Still, even in such persons, as soon as their attention is directed to the subject, there is a full recognition of ill-desert, a readiness to acknowledge that salvation is a matter of grace, and that they would have no right to complain had they been left to perish in their sins. Diversified, therefore, as may be the experience of God's people on

this subject, they agree in acknowledging the justice of God in his demands and threatenings, and in regarding themselves as unworthy of the least of all His favors.

Section II. Insufficiency of our own righteousness and of our own strength.

Another essential characteristic of genuine conviction is the persuasion that our own good works are entirely insufficient to recommend us to God, or to be the ground of our acceptance before him. Since the Scriptures declare that we are justified freely, not by works, lest any man should boast, but by faith in Jesus Christ, our experience must accord with this declaration. We must have such views of the holiness of God, of the extent of his law and of our own unworthiness as will make us fully sensible that we cannot secure by our own works, either pardon or acceptance. It's easy to profess that we don't trust to our own righteousness, but to really divest ourselves of all reliance upon our supposed excellence, is a difficult task. When a man is roused to a sense of his guilt and danger, his first impulse is almost always to fly to any other refuge than that provided in the gospel. The most natural method of appeasing conscience is the promise of reformation. Particular sins are therefore forsaken, and a struggle, it may be, is maintained against all others. This conflict is often long and painful, but it is always unsuccessful. It is soon found that sin, in one form or other, is constantly getting the mastery; and the soul feels that something more must be done if it is ever to make itself fit for heaven. It is therefore ready to do, or to submit to anything which appears necessary for this purpose.

What particular form of works it may be which it endeavors to weave into a robe of righteousness, depends on the degree of knowledge which it possesses, or the kind of religious instruction which it receives. When greatly ignorant of the gospel, it endeavors by painful penances, self-imposed, or prescribed by priestly authority, to make satisfaction for its sins. Experience teaches that there is no extremity of self-denial to which a conscience-stricken man will not gladly submit as a means of satisfying the demands of God. If heaven were really to be gained by such means, we would see the road crowded by the young and old, the rich and poor, the learned and ignorant, in multitudes as countless as those which throng the cruel temples of the Hindus, or which perish on the burning sands of Arabia. This is the easiest, the pleasantest, the most congenial of all the methods of salvation taught by the cunning craftiness of men. It is no wonder that those who teach it as the doctrine of the gospel, should find submissive hearers. If men can be allowed to *purchase* heaven, or make atonement for past transgressions by present suffering, they will gladly undertake it. This is so congenial to the human heart, that men who are well informed, and who pride themselves on their independence of mind, are scarcely less apt to be caught in the meshes of this net, than their more ignorant brethren. We therefore see statesmen and philosophers, as well as peasants, wearing sackcloth, or walking barefoot at the bidding of their religious teachers.

In Protestant countries, where the Bible is generally accessible, it is rare to see any such gross exhibitions of the spirit of self-

righteousness. The Scriptures so clearly teach the method of salvation, that almost everyone knows that at least mere external works of morality or discipline cannot avail to our justification before God. We must have a finer robe, a robe composed of duties of a higher value. Prayers are multiplied, the house of God is frequented, the whole routine of religious duties is assiduously attended to, under the impression that we will thus satisfy the demands of God and secure his favor. Multitudes are contented with this routine. Their apprehensions of the character and requirements of God, of the evil of sin, and of their own ill-desert are so low, that this remedy is adequate for all the wounds their consciences feel. The performance of their social and religious duties seems sufficient, in their view, to entitle them to the character of religious men; and they are satisfied. Thus it was with Paul, who considered himself blameless, as touching the righteousness of the law. ^{Phi 3:6} But all his strictness of moral duty and religious observance, was discovered to be worthless so far as satisfying the demands of God is concerned. And every man, who is brought to accept the offer of salvation as presented in the gospel, is made to feel that it is not for anything which he either does or abstains from doing, that his sins are pardoned and his person is accepted before God. No indeed, he sees that what men call their “good works” are so impure, as to be themselves a ground of condemnation. What are cold, wandering, selfish, irreverent prayers, but offenses against God, whom we pretend to propitiate by services which are but a mockery of His holiness? And what is any routine of heartless observances — or if not heartless, at least so imperfect as to fail to secure even our own

approval — in the eyes of Him before whom the heavens are unclean? What approach can such services make either towards satisfying the present demands of God, or atoning for years of neglect and sin? It requires but little insight into the state of his own heart, or the real character of the divine law, to convince the sinner that he must have a better righteousness than that which consists of his own duties or observances.

The convinced sinner is therefore soon driven from this foundation of sand; but he resorts to another refuge nearer the cross, he supposes, which seems to require more self-renunciation. He ceases to think of establishing his own righteousness, but he still wishes to be made *worthy* to receive the righteousness of God. He knows that he can never cancel his debt of guilt, that his best services are unworthy of acceptance, that with all his circumspection, he never lives a day in full compliance with the just demands of the law, and consequently that his salvation must be of grace. But he still thinks he must in some way *merit* that grace, or at least, be prepared for its reception by some observance or some experience. The distressed soul imagines that if it could be more *distressed*, more *humbled*, more touched with *sorrow* or *remorse*, it might then find acceptance. It sees that its long course of disobedience and ingratitude, its rejection of Christ, its disregard of mercies and warnings, its thousand sins of commission and omission, if forgiven at all, must be gratuitously pardoned. But this hardness of heart, this lack of due tenderness and penitence, is a sin which must first be gotten out of the way, before the others can be remitted.

It is, however, only one of a long, black catalogue. It can no more be separately conquered or atoned for, before coming to Christ, than any other sin of heart or life. It is often long before the soul is brought to see this, or to feel that it is really endeavoring to make itself better before applying to the physician; to accomplish at least some preparatory part of salvation for itself, so as not to be entirely indebted to the Redeemer. At last, however, the soul discovers its mistake; it finds that Christ does not save sinners for their tenderness or conviction; that tears are not more worthy of acceptance than fasting, or almsgiving; that it is the unworthy, the hard-hearted, the ungodly — those who have *nothing* to recommend them — that Christ came to save, and whom he accepts in order to render them contrite and tenderhearted and obedient. These graces are His gifts; and if we stay away from him until we get them ourselves, we must perish in our sins. The soul must be brought to this entire self-renunciation, this absolute rejection of everything in itself as the ground or reason of its acceptance, before it embraces the offers of the gospel.

It is included in what has been said, that a consciousness of our own weakness is a necessary ingredient, or consequence of true conviction. There is not only a giving up of our own righteousness, but of our own strength. All that is necessary here, as on other points, is that we should feel what is true. If it is the doctrine of the Bible that the sinner can *change his own heart*, subdue his sins, excite all right affections in his heart, then genuine religious experience requires that this truth should be known, not merely as a

matter of speculation, but as a matter of consciousness. But if the Scriptures teach that *this change of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit*; that we are born not of the will of man but of God; ^{Joh 1.13} that it is the exceeding greatness of the divine power that operates in those who believe, quickening those who were dead in trespasses and sins, creating them anew in Christ Jesus so that they are *His* workmanship, created for good works; ^{Eph 2.10} if from one end of the Scriptures to the other, the internal work of salvation is declared to be not by the might or power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord, then this is one of the great truths of revelation of which we *must* be convinced. Our experience must accord with this representation; and we must feel that to be true *in our case*, which God declares to be true universally.

When a man is brought to feel that he is a sinner, that his heart is far from being right in the sight of God, he as naturally turns to his own strength to effect a change and to bring himself up to the standard of the law, as he turns to his own works as a compensation for his sins, or as a ground of confidence towards God. His efforts, therefore, are directed to subdue the power of sin, and to excite religious feelings in his heart. He endeavors to mortify pride, to subdue the influence of the body, to wean himself from the world. He gives up his sinful, or worldly associates; he strengthens his purposes against evil; he forces himself to discharge the most ungrateful duties and exercises himself in self-denial. At the same time, he tries to force himself into a right state of mind, to make himself believe, repent, love, and exercise all the Christian graces of meekness, humility, brotherly

kindness, and charity — that is, he tries to make himself *religious*. He does everything in his own strength and to save himself. Sometimes this course is pursued to the end of life. At others, it is continued for years, and then found to be all in vain. Wesley tells us this was the kind of religion which he had, until his visit to America and his intercourse with the Moravians. This is the religion of ascetics, which maybe persevered in through stress of conscience, or fear of perdition, with great strictness and constancy. Almost every man tests this. He will be his own savior if he can. It is found to be a hopeless task, however, by those who are taught of God.

The subtle evil of the heart is not to be subdued by any such efforts. If we force ourselves to forego the pleasures of sin, we cannot destroy the desire of forbidden joys. If we refuse to gratify pride, we cannot prevent its aspirations. If we relinquish the pursuit of worldly things, we still retain the love of the world. If we force ourselves to perform religious duties, we cannot make those duties a delight. If we compel ourselves to think of God, we cannot force ourselves to love Him, to desire communion with Him, to take pleasure in his service, and to delight in all his requirements. No one can tell the misery arising from these painful and ineffectual struggles; these vain attempts to subdue sin and excite the Christian graces. If anything could be taken as a substitute for them; if making many prayers, or submitting to any suffering, could be taken as an equivalent, it would be gladly acceded to. But to change the heart, to delight in God, to be really spiritual and holy, is a work the sinner finds to be above his strength, and yet absolutely necessary. Repeated failures do not destroy his

delusion; he still thinks that this is his work, and that he must do it or be lost. He therefore struggles on; he collects all his strength, and at length suddenly discovers it to be perfect weakness. He finds that if he is ever renewed and made holy, it must be the work of God, and he cries in the depth of his distress, *Lord save me, or I perish*. He gives up working in his own strength and sees what he wonders he never saw before: that the Christian *virtues* are really *graces*, *i.e.* gifts; that they are not excellencies to be wrought out by ourselves; but favors bestowed through Christ and for Christ's sake; that it is the Holy Spirit purchased and sent by Him that is to change the heart and convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment; that faith, repentance, joy, peace, humility, and meekness are the fruits of that Spirit, and not the products of our own evil hearts; that if we could make ourselves holy, we should scarcely need a Savior; and that it is the greatest of all delusions to suppose that we must be holy *before* we come to God through Christ, instead of holiness being the *result* of our reconciliation.

While we are under the law, we bring forth fruit unto death. ^{Rom 7.5} It is not until we are free from the law and reconciled to God by the death of his Son, that we bring forth fruit unto righteousness. This great truth, though written on every page of the Bible, every man has to learn for himself. He cannot be made to understand it by reading it in the Scriptures, or by being told it by others. He must try his own strength until he finds it to be nothing, before he submits to be saved by the grace of God; and bowing at the feet of Jesus, in utter despair

of any other helper, he says, *Lord if you will, you can make me clean.* ^{Mat 8.2}

The man, therefore, whom the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, he causes to understand and believe what God has revealed on this subject. He makes him feel that what He declares to be true of all men, is true of *him*; that he deserves what God declares all men deserve; that he has no merit to recommend him to God, and no strength to change his own heart. This knowledge the Spirit communicates through the law, which by presenting the perfect rule of duty, shows us how far short we come of the glory of God, and how often and justly we have incurred its penalty; which convinces us that we are entirely unable to comply with its righteous demands; and that no mere objective presentation of what is holy, just, and good can change the heart, or destroy the power of indwelling sin — since even when we see the excellence of the law, we do not conform to it, and cannot do the things that we would, but ever find a law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into subjection to the law of sin. ^{Rom 7.23} It is thus that the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; ^{Gal 3.24} to drive us from every refuge of our own righteousness and strength, to Him who of God, is made both justification and sanctification to those who believe. ^{1Cor 1.30}

CHAPTER V. JUSTIFICATION.

Section I. Importance of the doctrine.

Explanation of the

Scriptural terms relating to it.

Justification is not by works.

The state of mind described in the preceding chapter, cannot be long endured. Some way of satisfying the demands of conscience must be adopted. When the mind is enlightened by divine truth, and duly impressed with a sense of guilt, it cannot fail to anxiously inquire, How can a man be just with God? The answer given to this question decides the character of our religion, and if practically adopted, our future destiny. To give a wrong answer, is to mistake the way to heaven. It is to err where error is fatal, because it cannot be corrected. If God requires one thing, and we present another, how can we be saved? If He has revealed a method in which he can be just and yet justify the sinner, and if we reject that method and insist on pursuing a different way, how can we hope to be accepted? Therefore, the answer which is given to the above question should be seriously pondered by all who assume the office of religious teachers, and by all who rely upon their instructions. As we are not to be judged by proxy, but every man must answer for himself, so every man should be satisfied for himself what the Bible teaches on this subject. All that religious teachers can do, is to endeavor to aid the investigations of those who are anxious to learn the way of life. And

in doing this, the safest method is to adhere strictly to the instructions of the Scriptures, and exhibit the subject as it is presented there. The substance and form of this all-important doctrine are so intimately connected, that those who attempt to separate them can hardly fail to err. What one discards as belonging merely to the *form*, another considers as belonging to its *substance*. All certainty and security are lost as soon as this method is adopted, and it becomes a matter to be decided exclusively by *our own views* of right and wrong, as to what is to be retained and what is to be rejected from the Scriptural representations. Our only security, therefore, is to take the language of the Bible in its obvious meaning, and put the construction on it which the persons to whom it was addressed must have given it, and consequently, which the sacred writers intended it to bear.

As the doctrine of justification is not only frequently stated in the sacred Scriptures, but formally taught and vindicated, all that will be attempted in this chapter is to give, as faithfully as possible, a representation of what the inspired writers inculcate on this subject. That is, to state what positions they assume, what arguments they give to sustain those positions, how they answer the objections to their doctrine, and what application they make of it to the hearts and consciences of their readers.

It is one of the primary doctrines of the Bible, everywhere either asserted or assumed, that *we are under the law of God*. This is true of all classes of men, whether they enjoy a divine revelation or not.

Everything which God has revealed as a rule of duty, enters into the constitution of the law which binds those to whom that revelation is given, and by which they are to be ultimately judged. Those who have not received any external revelation of the divine will, are a law unto themselves. The knowledge of right and wrong written on their hearts, is of the nature of a divine law, having its authority and sanction; and the heathen are to be judged by it in the last day.

God has seen fit to annex the promise of life, to obedience to His law. *The man who does these things shall live by them,* ^{Rom 10.5} is the language of Scripture on this subject. To the lawyer who admitted that the law required love to God and man, our Savior said, you have answered right. *Do this, and you shall live.* ^{Luk 10.28} And to one who asked him, What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? he said, *If you would enter into life, keep the commandments.* ^{Mat 19.17} On the other hand, the law proclaims death as the penalty of transgression. The wages of sin is death. Such is the uniform declaration of Scripture on this subject.

The obedience which the law demands, is called *righteousness*; and those who render that obedience are called *righteous*. To ascribe righteousness to anyone, or to pronounce him righteous, is the scriptural meaning of the word *to justify*. The word never means to make good in a moral sense, but always to *pronounce* just or righteous. Thus God says, I will not justify the wicked. ^{Exo 23.7} Judges are commanded to justify the righteous and to condemn the wicked. ^{Deu 25.1} Woe is pronounced on those who justify the wicked for a

reward. ^{Isa 5.23} In the New Testament it is said, By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight. ^{Rom 3.20} It is God who justifies, who is he that condemns? ^{Rom 8.33-34} There is scarcely a word in the Bible, the meaning of which is less open to doubt. There is no passage in the New Testament in which it is used out of its ordinary and obvious sense. ⁷ When God justifies a man, He declares him to be righteous. To justify never means to render one holy. It is said to be sinful to justify the wicked; but it could never be sinful to render the wicked *holy*. And as the law demands righteousness, to then impute or ascribe righteousness to anyone, in scriptural language, is to *justify*. To make (or constitute) righteous, is an equivalent form of expression. Hence, to be righteous before God, and to be justified, mean the same thing, as in the following passage: Not the hearers of the law are righteous before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ^{Rom 2.13} The attentive, and especially the anxious reader of the Bible, cannot fail to observe that these various expressions — to be righteous in the sight of God, to impute righteousness, to constitute righteous, to justify, and others of similar import — are so interchanged as to explain each other, and to make it clear that to justify a man is to ascribe or impute righteousness to him. The great question then is, *How is this righteousness to be obtained?* We have reason to be thankful that the answer which the Bible gives to this question is so perfectly plain.

In the first place, it is not only asserted but *proved* that the righteousness by which we are to be justified before God, is *not* of works.

The apostle's first argument on this point is derived from the consideration that the law demands a *perfect* righteousness. If the law was satisfied by an imperfect obedience, or by a routine of external duties, or by any service which men are competent to render, then indeed, justification would be by works. But since it demands perfect obedience, justification by works is absolutely impossible for sinners. It is thus that the apostle reasons: *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written, cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* ^{Gal 3.10} As the law pronounces its curse upon every man who continues not to do all that it commands, and as no man can pretend to this perfect obedience, it follows that all who look to the law for justification must be condemned. To the same effect, he says in the following verse, *The law is not of faith, but the man who does them shall live by them.* That is, the law is not satisfied by any single grace or imperfect obedience. It knows, and cannot know any other ground of justification, than complete compliance with its demands. Hence in the same chapter, Paul says, *If there had been a law which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.* ^{Gal 3.21} If the law could pronounce righteous, and thus give a title to the promised life to those who had broken its commands, there would have been no necessity for any other provision for the salvation of men. But as the law cannot thus lower its demands, justification by the law is impossible. The same truth is taught in a different form, when it is said, *If righteousness comes by the law, Christ died in vain.* ^{Gal 2.21} There would have been no necessity for the death of Christ if it had

been possible to satisfy the law by the imperfect obedience which we can render. Paul therefore warns all those who look to works for justification, that they are debtors to do the *whole* law. ^{Gal.5.3} It knows no compromise; it cannot demand less than what is right, and perfect obedience is right. And therefore its only language is as before, *Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law, to do them; and The man who does those things shall live by them.* Every man, therefore, who expects justification by works, must see to it, not that he is better than other men, or that he is very exact and does many things, or that he fasts twice in the week, and gives tithes of all he possesses, but that he is sinless.

That the law of God is thus strict in its demands, is a truth which lies at the foundation of all Paul's reasoning in reference to the method of justification. He proves that the Gentiles have sinned against the law written on their hearts; and that the Jews have broken the law revealed in their Scriptures; both Jews and Gentiles therefore are under sin, and the whole world is guilty before God. Hence he infers that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight. There is no force in this reasoning, however, except on the assumption that the law demands perfect obedience. How many men, who freely acknowledge that they are sinners, depend on their works for acceptance with God! They see no inconsistency between the acknowledgment of sin, and the expectation of justification by works. The reason is, they proceed on a very different principle from the one adopted by the apostle. They suppose that the law may be

satisfied by very imperfect obedience. Paul assumes that God demands perfect conformity to his will, that His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Therefore, it is enough for him that men have sinned, to prove that they cannot be justified by works. It is not a question of degrees more or less, for there is no difference as to this point, since all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. ^{Rom 3.23}

Men are disposed to think that this doctrine, though so plainly taught in scripture, is very severe. They imagine that their good deeds will be compared with their evil deeds, and that they will be rewarded or punished as one class or the other preponderates; or that the sins of one part of life may be atoned for by the good works of another; or that they can escape by mere confession and repentance. They could not entertain such expectations, if they believed themselves to be under a law. No human law is administered as men seem to hope the law of God will be. Someone who steals or murders, though it is but once, though he confesses and repents, though he does any number of acts of charity, is no less a thief or murderer. The law cannot take cognizance of his repentance and reformation. If he steals or murders, the law condemns him. Justification by the law is impossible for him. The law of God extends to the most secret exercises of the heart. It condemns whatever in its nature is evil. If a man violates this perfect rule of right, justification by the law ends; he has failed to comply with its conditions; and the law can only condemn him. To justify him, would be to say that he had not transgressed. However, men

think that they are not to be dealt with on the principles of strict law. *Here is their fatal mistake.* It is here that they are in most direct conflict with the Scriptures, which proceed upon the uniform assumption of our subjection to the law. Under the government of God, strict law is nothing but perfect excellence; it is the steady exercise of moral rectitude. Even conscience, when duly enlightened and roused, is as strict as the law of God. It refuses to be appeased by repentance, reformation, or penance. It enforces every command and every denunciation of our Supreme Ruler, and it teaches as plainly as the Scriptures themselves, that justification by an imperfect obedience is impossible. As *conscience* is fallible, however, no reliance on this subject can be placed on her testimony. The appeal is to the word of God, which clearly teaches that it is impossible for a sinner to be justified by works, because the law demands *perfect* obedience.

The apostle's second argument to show that justification is not by works, is *the testimony of the Scriptures of the Old Testament*. This testimony is urged in various forms. In the first place, as the apostle proceeds on the principle that the law demands perfect obedience, all those passages which assert the universal sinfulness of men, are so many declarations that they cannot be justified by works. He therefore quotes such passages as the following: *There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one.* ^{Rom 3.10, 12} The Old Testament, by teaching that all men are

sinners, does, in the apostle's view, thereby teach that they can never be accepted before God on the ground of their own righteousness. To say that a man is a sinner, is to say that the law condemns him; and of course it cannot justify him. As the ancient Scriptures are full of declarations of the sinfulness of men, so they are full of proof that justification is not by works.

But in the second place, Paul cites their direct affirmative testimony in support of his doctrine. In the Psalms it is said, *Do not enter into judgment with your servant; for in your sight no man living shall be justified.* ^{Psa 143.2} He often quotes this passage; [8](#) and to the same class belong all those passages which speak of the insufficiency or worthlessness of human righteousness in the sight of God.

In the third place, the apostle refers to those passages which imply the doctrine for which he contends; that is, to those which speak of the acceptance of men with God as a matter of grace, as something which they do not deserve, and for which they can urge no claim founded upon their own merit. It is with this view that he refers to the language of David; Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. ^{Rom 4.7-8} The fact that a man is *forgiven* implies that he is *guilty*; and the fact that he is guilty, implies that his justification cannot rest upon his own character or conduct. It need hardly be remarked that in this view, the whole of Scripture, from beginning to end, is crowded with condemnations of the doctrine of justification by works. Every penitent confession, every appeal to

God's mercy, is a renunciation of all personal merit; it is a declaration that the penitent's hope was not founded on anything in himself. Such confessions and appeals are indeed often made by those who still rely on their good works, or inherent righteousness, for acceptance with God. This, however, does not invalidate the apostle's argument. It only shows that such persons have a different view of what is necessary for justification, from that which is entertained by the apostle. They suppose that the demands of the law are so low, that although they are sinners and need to be forgiven, they can still do what the law demands. Whereas, Paul proceeds on the assumption that the law requires perfect obedience, and therefore every confession of sin or appeal for mercy, involves a renunciation of justification by the law.

Again, the apostle represents the Old Testament as teaching that justification is not by works, by showing that they inculcate a different method of obtaining acceptance with God. They do this by the doctrine which they teach concerning the Messiah as a Redeemer from sin. Hence Paul says that the method of justification without works (not founded on works) was testified by the law and the prophets; that is, by the whole of the Old Testament. The two methods of acceptance with God, the one by works the other by a propitiation for sin, are incompatible. And as the ancient Scriptures teach the latter method, they repudiate the former. But moreover, in express terms they assert that, *The just shall live by faith.* ^{Hab 2.4} And the law knows nothing of faith; its language is, *The man who does them shall live by them.* ^{Gal 3.11-12} The law knows nothing of anything

but obedience as the ground of acceptance. If the Scriptures say we are accepted through faith, they thereby say that we are *not* accepted on the ground of obedience.

Again, the examples of justification given in the Old Testament, show that it was not by works. The apostle appeals particularly to the case of Abraham, and asks whether he attained justification by works? He answers, No, for if he were justified by works he had something of which to glory, but he had no ground of glorying before God, and therefore he was not justified by works. ^{Rom 4.2-3} And the Scriptures expressly assert, *Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness*. His acceptance, therefore, was by faith and not by works.

In all these various ways, the apostle makes the authority of the Old Testament sustain his doctrine that justification is not by works. This authority is as decisive for us as it was for the ancient Jewish Christians. We also believe the Old Testament to be the word of God, and its truths come to us explained and enforced by Christ and his apostles. We have the great advantage of an infallible interpretation of these early oracles of truth. And the argumentative manner in which their authority is cited and applied, prevents all obscurity as to the real intentions of the sacred writers. That *by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified before God*, is taught so clearly and so frequently in the New Testament — it is so often asserted, so formally proved, so variously assumed — that no one can doubt that such is indeed the doctrine of the word of God. The only point on which the

serious inquirer can even raise a question is, What kind of works do the Scriptures mean to exclude as the foundation for acceptance with God? Does the apostle mean works in the widest sense? Or does he merely intend ceremonial observances, or works of mere formality performed without any real love to God?

Those who attend to the nature of his assertions and to the course of his argument, will find that there is no room for doubt on this subject. The primary principle on which his argument rests precludes all ground for mistaking his meaning. He assumes that the law demands perfect obedience, and as no man can render that obedience, he infers that no man can be justified by the law. He does *not* argue that because the law is spiritual, it cannot be satisfied by mere ceremonies or by works flowing from an impure motive. He nowhere says that though we cannot be justified by external rites, or by works having the mere form of goodness, we are justified by our sincere though imperfect obedience. On the contrary, he constantly teaches that, since we are sinners, and since the law condemns all sin, it condemns us; and justification by the law is therefore impossible. He applies this argument to the Jews and the Gentiles without distinction, to the whole world, whether they knew anything of the Jewish Scriptures or not. It was the moral law, the law which he pronounced holy, just, and good, which says, *You shall not covet*; it is this law, however revealed, whether in the writings of Moses, or in the human heart, of which he constantly asserts that it cannot give life, or teach the way of acceptance with God. As most of those to whom he wrote had enjoyed a divine revelation, and as that

revelation included the law of Moses and all its rites, he of course included that law in his statement, and often specially refers to it — but never in its limited sense as a code of religious ceremonies; it is always in its widest scope as including the highest rule of *moral duty* made known to men.

And hence he never contrasts one class of works with another, but constantly contrasts works and faith, excluding all classes of the former — works of righteousness as well as those of mere formality. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he has saved us. ^{Tit 3.5} Who has saved us not according to our works. ^{2Tim 1.9} We are saved by faith, not by works. ^{Eph 2.9} Indeed, men are said to be justified *without* works; to be ungodly when justified; and it is not *until* they are justified, that they perform any really good works. It is only when united to Christ, that we bring forth fruit unto God. Hence we are said to be his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. All the inward excellence of the Christian, and the fruits of the Spirit, are the *consequences* and not the *causes* of his reconciliation and acceptance with God. They are the robe of beauty, the white garment, with which Christ arrays those who come to him poor and blind and naked. Then it is the plain doctrine of the word of God, that our justification is not founded upon our own obedience to the law. Nothing done by us, or wrought in us, can for a moment stand the test of a rule of righteousness which pronounces a curse upon all those who do not continue in all things written in the Book of the Law, to do them.

Section II. The demands of the Law are satisfied by what Christ has done.

We have thus seen that the Scriptures teach *first*, that all men are naturally under the law as prescribing the terms of their acceptance with God; and *secondly*, that no obedience which sinners can render is sufficient to satisfy the demands of that law. It follows then that unless we are freed from the law, not as a rule of duty, but as prescribing the conditions of acceptance with God, justification is impossible for us. It is therefore, the *third* great point of Scriptural doctrine on this subject, that believers are free from the law in the sense just stated. *You are not under the law, says the apostle, but under grace.* ^{Rom 6.14} To illustrate this declaration, he refers to the case of a woman who is bound to her husband as long as he lives; but when he is dead, she is free from her obligation to him, and is at liberty to marry another man. So we are delivered from the law as a rule of justification, and are at liberty to embrace a different method of obtaining acceptance with God. ^{Rom 7.1, 6} Paul says of himself, that he had died to the law, ^{Gal 2.19} *i.e.* he had become free from it. And the same is said of all believers. ^{Rom 7.6} He insists upon this freedom as essential not only to *justification* but to *sanctification*. For while under the law, the motions of sin, which were by the law, brought forth fruit unto death; but now we are delivered from the law, that we may serve God in newness of spirit. ^{Rom 7.5-6} Before faith came, we

were kept under the law, which he compares to a schoolmaster; but now we are no longer under a schoolmaster. ^{Gal 3:24-25} He regards the desire to be subject to the law as the great infatuation. Tell me, he says, you who desire to be under the law, Do you not hear the law? And then he shows that those who are under the demands of a legal system, are in the condition of slaves, and not of sons and heirs. Stand fast, therefore, he exhorts, in the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Behold! I Paul say to you, that if you are circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. For I testify to everyone who is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect to you; whichever of you are justified by the law, you have fallen from grace. ^{Gal 5:1-4} Paul considered this infatuation to be madness. And so he exclaims, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently portrayed among you, as crucified? This only would I learn from you, Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ^{Gal 3:1-2} This apostasy was so fatal — the substitution of legal obedience for the work of Christ as the ground of justification, was so destructive — that Paul pronounces accursed any man or angel who preached such a doctrine for the gospel of the grace of God.

It was to the law, as revealed in the books of Moses, that the fickle Galatians were disposed to look for justification. Their apostasy, however, consisted in going back to the law, no matter in what *form* it was revealed, to works, no matter of what kind, as the ground of justification. The apostle's arguments and denunciations are

therefore so framed as to apply to the adoption of any form of legal obedience, instead of the work of Christ, as the ground of our confidence towards God. To suppose that all he says relates exclusively to a relapse into *Judaism*, is to suppose that we Gentiles have no part in the redemption of Christ. If it was only from the bondage of the Jewish economy that he redeemed his people, then those who were never subject to that bondage, have no interest in his work. And of course Paul was strangely infatuated in preaching Christ crucified *to the Gentiles*. We find, however, that what he taught in the Epistle to the Galatians, in special reference to the law of Moses, he teaches in the Epistle to the Romans in reference to that law which is holy, just, and good, and which condemns the most secret sins of the heart.

The nature of the apostle's doctrine is, if possible, even clearer from the manner in which he vindicates it, than from his direct assertions. What then! he asks, Shall we continue in sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid! ^{Rom 6.1} Had Paul taught that we are freed from the ceremonial, in order to be subject to the moral law, there could have been no room for such an objection. But if he taught that the moral law itself could not give life, that we must be freed from its demands as the condition of acceptance with God, then indeed, to the wise of this world, it might seem that he was loosing the bands of moral obligation, and opening the door to the great licentiousness. Hence the frequency and earnestness with which he repels the objection, and shows that so far from legal bondage being necessary to holiness, it must cease before holiness

can exist — that it is not until the curse of the law is removed, and the soul reconciled to God, that holy affections rise in the heart, and the fruits of holiness appear in the life. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! indeed, we establish the law. ^{Rom 3.31}

It is then clearly the doctrine of the Bible, that believers are freed from the law as prescribing the conditions of their acceptance with God; it is no longer incumbent upon them, in order for justification, to fulfil its demand of perfect obedience, or to satisfy its penal exactions. But how is this deliverance effected? How is it that rational and accountable beings are exempted from the obligations of that holy and just law which was originally imposed on their race as the rule of justification?

The answer to this question includes the *fourth* great truth respecting the way of salvation taught in the Scriptures. It is not by the abrogation of the law, either as to its precepts or penalty; it is not by lowering its demands, and accommodating them to the altered capacities or inclinations of men. We have seen how constantly the apostle teaches that the law still demands perfect obedience, and that those who seek justification at its hands, are debtors to do the whole law. He no less clearly teaches that death is as much the wages of sin in *our* case, as it was in that of *Adam*. If it is neither by abrogation nor relaxation that we are freed from the demands of the law, then how has this deliverance been effected? By the mystery of *vicarious obedience and suffering*. This is the gospel of the grace of God. This is what was a scandal to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, but,

to those who are called, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ^{1Cor 1.23-24}

The Scriptures teach us that the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who did not think it robbery to be equal with God, became flesh, and subjected himself to the very law to which we were bound; he perfectly obeyed that law and suffered its penalty, and thus, by satisfying its demands, he delivered us from its bondage and introduced us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. ^{Rom 8.21} It is thus that the doctrine of *redemption* is presented in the Scriptures. God, says the apostle, sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law. ^{Gal 4.4-5} Being made under the law, we know that he obeyed it perfectly, brought in everlasting righteousness, and is therefore declared to be the Lord our righteousness, since by his obedience, many are constituted righteous. ^{Rom 5.19} He is therefore said to be made righteousness to us. ^{1Cor 1.30} And those who are in him are said to be righteous before God, not having their own righteousness, but that which is by the faith of Christ. ^{Phi 3.9}

That we are redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ's enduring that curse in our place, is taught in every variety of form, from the beginning to the end of the Bible. There was greater need that this point be clearly and variously presented, because it is the one on which an enlightened conscience immediately fastens. *The desert of death, begets the fear of death.* And this fear of death cannot be

allayed until it is seen how, in consistency with divine justice, we are freed from the righteous penalty of the law. How this is done, the Scriptures teach in the most explicit manner. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. ^{Gal 3.13} Paul had just said, *As many as are of the law are under the curse*. But all men are naturally under the law, and therefore all are under the curse. How are we redeemed from it? By Christ's being made a curse for us. Such is the simple and sufficient answer to this most important of all questions.

The doctrine so plainly taught in Gal 3.13, that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by bearing it in our stead, is no less clearly presented in 2Cor 5.21. *He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. This is represented as the only ground on which men are authorized to preach the gospel. *We are ambassadors for Christ*, says the apostle, *as though God beseeched you by us; we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God*. Then follows a statement of the ground on which this offer of reconciliation is presented. God has made effectual provision for the pardon of sin, by making Christ sin for us — though he was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners — that we might be made righteous in him. The iniquities of us all were laid on him; he was treated as a sinner in our place, in order that we might be treated as righteous in Him.

The same great truth is taught in all those passages in which Christ is said to bear our sins. The expression *to bear sin*, is one which is

clearly explained by its frequent occurrence in the sacred Scriptures. It means to bear the punishment due to sin. It is said in Lev 20.17, *He that marries his sister, shall bear his iniquity.* Again, *Whoever curses his God, shall bear his sin.* It was said of someone who failed to keep the Passover, *that man shall bear his sin.* Num 9.13 If a man sins, he will bear his iniquity. It is used in the same sense when one man bears the sin of another. *Your children will wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms.* Num 14.33 *Our fathers have sinned and are no longer, and we have borne their iniquities.* Lam 5.7 When it is said in Eze 18.20, that *the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*, it is obviously meant that the son will not be punished for the sins of the father. The meaning of this expression being so definite, there can be no doubt, of course, as to the manner in which it is to be understood, when used in reference to the Redeemer. The prophet Isaiah says, *The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. My righteous servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. He was numbered with transgressors, and bore the sins of many.* Isa 53.6, 11, 12 More explicit language could not be used. This whole chapter is designed to teach one great truth: that our sins were to be laid on the Messiah, that we might be freed from the punishment which they deserved. It is therefore said, *He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.* Isa 53.8 In the New Testament, the same doctrine is taught in the same terms. *He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree.* 1Pet 2.24 *Christ was offered to bear the sins of many.* Heb 9.28 *You know that he was*

manifested to take away (to bear) our sins. ^{1Joh 3:5} According to all these representations, Christ saves us from the punishment due to our sins, by bearing the curse of the law in our stead.

Intimately associated with the passages just referred to, are those which describe the Redeemer as a sacrifice, or propitiation. The essential idea of a sin-offering, is propitiation by means of vicarious punishment. That this is the Scriptural idea of a sacrifice, is plain from the laws of their institution, from the effects ascribed to them, and from the illustrative declarations of the sacred writers. The law prescribed that the offender should bring the victim to the altar, lay his hands on its head, and make confession of his crime; the animal would then be slain, and its blood sprinkled on the altar. Thus, it is said, He shall put his hand on the head of the burnt-offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ^{Lev 1:4} And he brought the bullock for a sin-offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bullock of the sin-offering. ^{Lev 8:14} The import of this imposition of hands is clearly taught in the following passage: And Aaron shall lay his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities, to a land not inhabited. ^{Lev 16:21-22} The imposition of hands, therefore, was designed to express symbolically the ideas of substitution and transfer of the liability to punishment. In the case just referred to, in order to convey more clearly the idea of the removal of the liability to punishment, the goat on whose head the sins of the people were

imposed, was sent into the wilderness; but another goat was slain and consumed in its stead.

The nature of these offerings is further obvious from the effects attributed to them. They were commanded in order to make atonement, to propitiate, to make reconciliation, to secure the forgiveness of sins. And they actually secured this effect. In the case of every Jewish offender, some penalty connected with the theocratical constitution under which he lived, was removed by the presentation and acceptance of the appointed sacrifice. This was all the effect, in the way of securing pardon, that the blood of bulls and of goats could produce. Their efficacy was confined to the purifying of the flesh, and to securing, for those who offered them, the advantages of the external theocracy. Besides this efficacy, however, which by divine appointment belonged to them considered in themselves, they were intended to prefigure and predict the true atoning sacrifice which was to be offered when the fulness of time should come.

Nothing, however, can more clearly illustrate the Scriptural doctrine of sacrifices, than the expressions employed by the sacred writers to convey the same idea as that intended by the term *sin-offering*. Thus, all that Isaiah taught about the Messiah — that the chastisement of our peace was upon him; that by his stripes we are healed; that he was stricken for the transgression of the people; that on him was laid the iniquity of us all, and that he bore the sins of many — he taught by saying, *He made his soul an offering for sin*. And in the epistle to

the Hebrews it is said, He was offered (as a sacrifice) to bear the sins of many. ^{Heb 9.28} The same idea, therefore, is expressed by saying either *he bore our sins*, or *he was made an offering for sin*. But to bear the sins of anyone, means to bear the punishment of those sins; and therefore, to be a sin-offering conveys the same meaning.

Such being the idea of a sacrifice which pervades the whole Jewish Scriptures, it is obvious that the sacred writers could not teach more distinctly and intelligibly the manner in which Christ secures the pardon of sin, than by saying he was made an offering for sin. All the early readers of the Scriptures were familiar with this mode of pardon. They had been accustomed to it from their earliest years. Not one of them could recall the time when the altar, the victim, and the blood were unknown to him. His first lessons in religion contained the ideas of confession of sin, substitution and vicarious sufferings and death. Therefore, when the inspired penmen told men imbued with these ideas, that Christ was a propitiation for sin, that he was offered as a sacrifice to make reconciliation, they told them in the plainest of all terms, that he secures the pardon of our sins by suffering in our stead. Jews could understand such language in no other way; and therefore, we may be sure it was intended to convey no other meaning. And in point of fact, it has been so understood by the Christian church from its first organization to the present day.

If it were merely in the way of casual allusion, that Christ was declared to be a sacrifice, we would not be authorized to infer from it the method of redemption. But this is far from being the case. This

doctrine is presented in the most didactic form. It is exhibited in every possible mode. It is asserted, illustrated, and vindicated. It is made the central point of all divine institutions and instructions. It is urged as the foundation of hope, as the source of consolation, the motive to obedience. It is in fact the gospel. It would be vain to attempt a reference to all the passages in which this great doctrine is taught. We are told that God set forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood. ^{Rom 3.25} Again, he is declared to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. ^{1Joh 2.2} He is called the Lamb of God that takes away (bears) the sins of the world. ^{Joh 1.29} You were not redeemed, says the apostle Peter, with corruptible things such as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. ^{1Pet 1.18-19} In the epistle to the Hebrews, this doctrine is more fully exhibited than in any other portion of Scripture. Christ is not only repeatedly called a *sacrifice*, but an elaborate comparison is made between the offering which he presented, and those which were offered under the old dispensation. If the blood of bulls and of goats, says the apostle, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit (possessing an eternal spirit) offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ^{Heb 9.13-14}

The ancient sacrifices in themselves could only remove ceremonial uncleanness. They could not purge the conscience or reconcile the soul to God. They were mere shadows of the true sacrifice for sins. Hence they were offered *daily*. Christ's sacrifice being really efficacious, was offered but *once*. It was because the ancient sacrifices were ineffectual, that Christ said, when he came into the world, *Sacrifice and offering you would not have, but you prepared for me a body. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have no pleasure, Then I said, Lo I come to do your will, O God.* ^{Heb 10.5} By which will, adds the apostle (that is, by accomplishing the purpose of God), *we are sanctified (or atoned for) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;* ^{Heb 10.10} and *by that one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified;* and about all this, he adds, *the Holy Ghost is witness.* ^{Heb 10.14-15}

The Scriptures therefore clearly teach that Jesus Christ delivers us from the punishment of our sins, by offering himself as a sacrifice on our behalf; so that, as under the old dispensation, the penalties attached to the violations of the theocratical covenant, were removed by the substitution and sacrifice of bulls and of goats, so under the spiritual theocracy, in the living temple of the living God, the punishment of sin is removed by the substitution and death of the Son of God. No ancient Israelite was ignorant of the mode of atonement and reconciliation, when he had forfeited by transgression, his liberty of access to the earthly sanctuary. So now, no conscience-stricken sinner who knows that he is unworthy to draw near to God, need be ignorant of that new and living way which

Christ has consecrated for us, through his flesh, so that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. ^{Heb 10.19-20}

In all the forms of expression mentioned up to here — namely, that Christ was made a curse for us; he was made sin for us; he bore our sins, he was made a sin offering — there is the idea of *substitution*. Christ took our place; he suffered in our stead; he acted as our representative. But as the act of a *substitute* is in effect the act of the *principal*, all that Christ did and suffered in that character, every believer is regarded as having done and suffered himself. The attentive and pious reader of the Bible will recognize this idea in some of the most common forms of Scriptural expression. Believers are those who are *in Christ*. This is their great distinction and most familiar designation. They are so united to him, that what he did in their behalf, they are declared to have done. When he died, they died; when he rose, they rose; as he lives, they also shall live.

The passages in which believers are said to have died in Christ are numerous. If one died for all, says the apostle, then all died (not, all were dead). ^{2Cor 5.14} He that died (with Christ) is justified from sin, *i.e.* freed from its condemnation and power; if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall live with him. ^{Rom 6.7-8} As a woman is freed from her husband by death, so believers are freed from the law by the body (the death) of Christ, because *his* death is in effect *their* death. ^{Rom 7.4} And in the following verse, he says, having died (in Christ), we are freed from the law. Every believer, therefore, may say with Paul, *I was crucified with Christ*. ^{Gal 2.20} In like manner, the resurrection of

Christ secures both the spiritual life and future resurrection of all his people. If we have been united to him in his death, we shall be in his resurrection. If we died with him, we shall live with him. ^{Rom 6.5, 8} God, says the apostle, has quickened us together with Christ; and has raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. ^{Eph 2.5-6} That is, God has quickened, raised, and exalted us together ⁹ with Christ.

It is on this ground also that Paul says that Christ rose as the first fruits of the dead; not merely the first in order, but the earnest and security of the resurrection of his people. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive. ^{1Cor 15.20, 22} As our union with Adam secures our death, union with Christ secures our resurrection. Adam is a type of him that was to come, that is Christ — inasmuch as the relation in which Adam stood to the whole race is analogous to that in which Christ stands to his own people. As Adam was our natural head, the poison of his sin flows in all our veins. As Christ is our spiritual head, eternal life which is in him, descends to all his members. It is not they that live, but Christ that lives in them. ^{Gal 2.20} This doctrine of the representative and vital union of Christ and believers pervades the New Testament. It is the source of the humility, the joy, the confidence which the sacred writers so often express. In themselves they were nothing, and deserved nothing; but in Him they possessed all things. Hence they counted all things but loss that they might be found in Him. Hence they determined to know nothing, to preach nothing, to glory in nothing but in Christ and him crucified.

The great doctrine of the vicarious sufferings and death of Jesus Christ is further taught in those numerous passages which refer our salvation, to his blood, his death, or his cross. Viewed in connection with the passages already mentioned, those now referred to not only teach the fact that the death of Christ secures the pardon of sin, but *how* it does it. To this class belong such declarations as the following: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. ^{1Joh 1.7} We have redemption through his blood. ^{Eph 1.7} He has made peace through the blood of his cross. ^{Col 1.20} Being justified by his blood. ^{Rom 5.9} You are made near by the blood of Christ. ^{Eph 2.13} You have come to the blood of sprinkling. ^{Heb 12.24} Elect for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. ^{1Pet 1.2} To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. ^{Rev 1.5} He has redeemed us to God by his blood. ^{Rev 5.9} This cup, said the Son of God himself, is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ^{Mat 26.28} The sacrificial character of the death of Christ is taught in all these passages. Blood was the means of atonement, and without the shedding of blood, there was no remission; therefore, when our salvation is so often ascribed to the blood of the Savior, it is declared that he died as a propitiation for our sins. The same remark may be made in reference to those passages which ascribe our redemption to the death, cross, and flesh of Christ; for these terms are interchanged, being of the same import. We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. ^{Rom 5.10} We are reconciled by his cross. ^{Eph 2.16} We are reconciled by the body of his flesh through death. ^{Col 1.22} We are delivered from the law by the body of Christ; ^{Rom 7.4} he abolished the law in his flesh; ^{Eph 2.15} he took away the handwriting which was

against us, nailing it to his cross. ^{Col 2.14} The more general expressions respecting Christ's dying for us receive a definite meaning from their connection with the more specific passages mentioned above. Everyone, therefore, knows what is meant when it is said that Christ died for the ungodly; ^{Rom 5.6} that he gave himself a ransom for many; ^{Mat 20.28} that he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. ^{1Pet 3.18} No less plain is the meaning of the Holy Spirit when it is said, God did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all; ^{Rom 8.32} that he was delivered for our offenses; ^{Rom 4.25} that he gave himself for our sins. ^{Gal 1.4}

Seeing then, that we owe everything to the expiatory sufferings of the blessed Savior, we cease to wonder that the Cross is rendered so prominent in the exhibition of the plan of salvation. We are not surprised at Paul's anxiety lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect; or that he should call the preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the cross; or that he should preach Christ crucified, both to Jews and Greeks, as the wisdom of God and the power of God; or that he should determine to glory in nothing save in the Cross of Christ.

As there is no truth more necessary to be known, so there is none more variously or plainly taught than the method of escaping the wrath of God due to us for sin. Besides all the clear exhibitions of Christ as bearing our sins — such as dying in our stead, making his soul an offering for sin, redeeming us by his blood — the Scriptures set him forth in the character of a Priest, in order that we might more

fully understand how it is that he effects our salvation. It was predicted long before his advent, that the Messiah was to be a priest. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, was the declaration of the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David. ^{Psa 110.4} Zechariah predicted that he would sit as a priest upon his throne. ^{Zec 6.13} The apostle defines a priest to be a man ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ^{Heb 5.1} Jesus Christ is the only real priest in the universe. All others were either pretenders, or the shadow of the great High Priest of our profession.

He had every necessary qualification for this office. *He was a man.* For inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest; one who can be touched with a sense of our infirmities, seeing that he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. *He was sinless.* For such a high priest became us, He who was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. *He was the Son of God.* The law made men having infirmity, to be priests. But God declared his Son to be a priest, who is consecrated forevermore. ^{Heb 7.28} The sense in which Christ is declared to be the Son of God, is explained in the first chapter of Hebrews. It is said there that he is the express image of God; that he upholds all things by the word of his power; that all the angels are commanded to worship him; that his throne is an everlasting throne; that in the beginning he laid the foundations of the earth; that he is from everlasting, and that his years do not fail. It is from the dignity of his person, possessing this

divine nature, that the apostle deduces the efficacy of his sacrifice, Heb 9.14 the perpetuity of his priesthood, Heb 7.16 and his ability to save to the uttermost all who come to God through him. Heb 7.25

He was duly constituted a priest. He didn't glorify himself to be made a high priest, but He that said to him, *You are my Son*, also said, *You are a priest forever*. He is the only real priest, and therefore his advent superseded all others, and put an immediate end to all their lawful ministrations by abolishing the typical dispensation with which they were connected. For the priesthood being changed, there was of necessity a change of the law. There was a disannulling of the former commandment for the weakness and unprofitableness of it; and there was the introduction of a better hope. Heb 7.12, 19 He has an appropriate offering to present. As every high priest is appointed to offer sacrifices, it was necessary that this man should have something to offer. This sacrifice was not the blood of goats or of calves, but his own blood; it was himself that he offered to God, to purge our conscience from dead works. Heb 9.12, 14 He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, which was accomplished when he was once offered to bear the sins of many. Heb 9.26, 28 He has passed into the heavens. As the high priest was required to enter into the most holy place with the blood of atonement, so Christ has entered not into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb 9.24 and where he ever lives to make intercession for us. Heb 7.25

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God (let the reader remember what that means), who has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having by himself purged our sins and made reconciliation for the sins of the people, every humble believer who commits his soul into the hands of this High Priest, may come with boldness to the throne of grace, assured that he will find mercy and grace to help in time of need.

Section III. The righteousness of Christ the true ground of our Justification. The practical effects of this doctrine.

The Bible, as we have seen, teaches *first*, that we are under a law which demands perfect obedience and which threatens death in case of transgression; *secondly*, that all men have failed in rendering that obedience, and therefore are subject to the threatened penalty; *thirdly*, that Christ has redeemed us from the law by being made under it and in our place, satisfying its demands. It only remains to be shown that this perfect righteousness of Christ is presented as the ground of our justification before God.

In scriptural language, *condemnation* is a sentence of death pronounced upon sin; *justification* is a sentence of life pronounced upon righteousness. As this righteousness is not our own, as we are sinners, ungodly, without works, it must be the righteousness of another, even of him who is our righteousness. Hence we find so constantly the distinction between *our own* righteousness, and that which *God* gives. The Jews, the apostle says, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, would not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. ^{Rom 10.3} This was the rock on which they split. They knew justification required righteousness; they insisted on urging their own, imperfect

as it was. And they would not accept of that which God had provided in the merits of his Son, who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. The same idea is presented in Rom 9.30-32, where Paul sums up the case of the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of believers. The Gentiles have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel has not attained it. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. The Jews would not receive and confide in the righteousness which God had provided, but endeavored by works, to prepare a righteousness of their own. This was the cause of their ruin. In direct contrast to the course pursued by the majority of his kinsmen, we find Paul renouncing all dependence upon his own righteousness, and thankfully receiving that which God had provided. He had every advantage and every temptation that any man could have to *trust in himself* — for he was one of the favored people of God, circumcised on the eighth day, and touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Yet all these things he counted but loss, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. ^{Phi 3.8-9}

Here the two righteousnesses are brought distinctly into view. The one was his own, consisting in obedience to the law; this Paul rejects as inadequate, and unworthy of acceptance. The other is of God and received by faith; this Paul accepts and glories in as all-sufficient, and as alone sufficient. This is the righteousness which the apostle

says God imputes to those without works. Hence it is called a *gift*, a free gift, a gift by grace; and believers are described as those who receive this gift of righteousness. ^{Rom 5.17} Hence we are never said to be justified by anything done by us or wrought in us, but by what Christ has done for us. We are justified through the redemption that is in him. ^{Rom 3.24} We are justified by his blood. ^{Rom 5.9} We are justified by his obedience. ^{Rom 5.19} We are justified by him from all things. ^{Act 13.39} He is our righteousness. ^{1Cor 1.30} We are made the righteousness of God in him. ^{2Cor 5.21} We are justified in his name. ^{1Cor 6.11} There is no condemnation to those who are in him. ^{Rom 8.1} Justification is therefore by faith in Christ, because faith is receiving and trusting to him as our Savior, as having done all that is required to secure our acceptance before God.

It is thus, then, that the Scriptures answer the question, *How can a man be just with God?* When the soul is burdened with a sense of sin, when it sees how reasonable and holy that law is which demands perfect obedience, and which threatens death as the penalty of transgression; when it feels the absolute impossibility of ever satisfying these just demands by its own obedience and sufferings — it is *then* that the revelation of Jesus Christ as our righteousness, is felt to be the wisdom and power of God unto salvation. Destitute of all righteousness in ourselves, we have our righteousness in him. What we could not do he has done for us. Therefore, the righteousness on which the sentence of justification is passed on the believing sinner, is not his own, but that of Jesus Christ.

It is one of the strongest evidences of the divine origin of the Scriptures, that they are suited to the nature and circumstances of man. If their doctrines were believed and their precepts obeyed, men would stand in their true relation to God, and the different classes of men to each other. Parents and children, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects, would be found in their proper sphere, and would attain the highest possible degree of excellence and happiness. Truth leads to holiness. And all truth is known to be truth, by its tendency to promote holiness. As this test, when it is applied to the Scriptures generally, evinces their divine perfection, so when it is applied to the cardinal doctrine of *Justification by faith in Jesus Christ*, it shows that doctrine to be worthy of all acceptance. On this ground, it is commended by the sacred writers. They declare it to be in the highest degree, honorable to God and beneficial to man. They assert that it is so arranged as to display the wisdom, justice, holiness, and love of God, while it secures the pardon, peace, and holiness of men. If it failed in either of these objects — if it were not suited to the divine character, or to our nature and necessities — it could not answer the end for which it was designed.

It will be readily admitted that the glory of God, in the exhibition or revelation of the divine perfections, is the highest conceivable end of creation and redemption. And consequently, any doctrine which is suited to make such exhibition is *on that account*, worthy of being universally received and gloried in. Now, the inspired writers teach us that it is peculiarly in the plan of redemption, that the divine perfections are revealed; that it was designed to show to

principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of God; that Christ was set forth as a propitiatory sacrifice to exhibit his righteousness or justice; and especially that in the ages to come, He might show forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. It is the love of God, the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of which surpass knowledge, that is here most conspicuously displayed. ^{Eph 3.18-19} Some men strangely imagine that the death of Christ *procured* for us the love of God; whereas it was the *effect* and not the *cause* of that love. Christ did not die that God might love us; rather, he died *because* God loved us. God commends his love towards us in this: that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ^{Rom 5.8} He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life. ^{Joh 3.16} In this was manifested the love of God towards us: because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. In this is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ^{1Joh 4.9-10}

As this love of God is manifested towards the unworthy, it is called grace, and this it is that the Scriptures dwell upon with such peculiar frequency and earnestness. The mystery of redemption is that a Being of infinite holiness and justice should manifest such wonderful love to sinners. Hence the sacred writers so earnestly denounce everything that obscures this peculiar feature of the gospel; everything which represents men as worthy, as meriting, or in any way by their own goodness, securing the exercise of this love of God. It is of grace lest any man should boast. We are justified by grace; we

are saved by grace; and if it is of grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. The apostle teaches us not only that the plan of salvation had its origin in the unmerited kindness of God, and that our acceptance with him is in no way or degree founded on our own worthiness, but moreover, that the actual administration of the economy of mercy is so conducted as to magnify this attribute of the divine character. God chooses the foolish, the base, the weak, yes those who are nothing, in order that no flesh should glory in His presence. Christ is made everything to us, that those who glory, should glory only in the Lord. ^{1Cor 1.27, 31}

It cannot fail to occur to every reader that unless he sincerely rejoices in this feature of the plan of redemption, unless he is glad that the whole glory of his salvation belongs to God, his heart cannot be in accordance with the gospel. If he believes that the ground of his acceptance is in himself, or even wishes that it were so, he is not prepared to join in those grateful songs of acknowledgment to Him who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, ^{2Tim 1.9} which it is the delight of the redeemed to offer to Him who loved them, and gave himself for them. ^{Eph 5.2} It is most obvious that the sacred writers are abundant in the confession of their unworthiness in the sight of God. They acknowledged that they were unworthy absolutely, and unworthy comparatively. It was of grace that any man was saved; and it was of grace that *they* were saved rather than others. It is therefore all of grace, that God may be exalted and glorified in all those who believe.

The doctrine of the gratuitous justification of sinners by faith in Jesus Christ, not only displays the infinite love of God, but it is declared to be peculiarly honorable to him, or peculiarly consistent with his attributes, because it is adapted to all men. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. ^{Rom 3.29-30} For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call on Him. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ^{Rom 10.12-13} This is no narrow, national, or sectarian doctrine. It is as broad as the earth. Wherever men can be found, the creatures of God, there the mercy of God in Christ Jesus may be preached. The apostle greatly exults in this feature of the plan of redemption, as worthy of God; and as making the gospel the foundation of a religion for all nations and ages. In revealing a salvation sufficient for all and suited for all, it discloses God in his true character, as the God and Father of all.

The Scriptures, however, represent this great doctrine as no less suited to meet the necessities of man, than it is to promote the glory of God. *If it exalts God, it humbles man.* If it renders it manifest that he is a Being of infinite holiness, justice, and love, it makes us feel that we are destitute of all merit, indeed most ill-deserving; that we are without strength; that our salvation is an undeserved favor. As nothing is truer than the guilt and helplessness of men, no plan of redemption which does not recognize these facts, could ever be in harmony with our inward experience, or command the full acquiescence of the penitent soul. The ascription of merit which we

are conscious that we do not deserve, produces of itself severe distress; and if this false estimate of our deserts is the ground of the exhibition of special kindness towards us, it destroys the happiness such kindness would otherwise produce. Therefore, to a soul sensible of its pollution and guilt in the sight of God, the doctrine that it is saved on account of its own goodness, or because it is better than other men, is discordant and destructive of its peace. Nothing but an absolutely gratuitous salvation can suit a soul sensible of its ill-desert. Nothing else suits its views of truth, or its sense of right. The opposite doctrine involves a falsehood and a moral impropriety in which neither reason nor conscience can acquiesce. The scriptural doctrine, which assumes what we know to be true (namely, our guilt and helplessness) places us in our proper relation to God; that relation which accords with the truth, with our sense of right, with our inward experience, and with every proper desire of our hearts. This is one of the reasons why the Scriptures represent *peace* as the consequence of justification by faith.

There can be no peace while the soul is not in harmony with God, and there can be no such harmony until it willingly occupies its true position in relation to God. So long as it does not acknowledge its true character, so long as it acts on the assumption of its ability to merit or to earn the divine favor, it is in a false position. Its feelings towards God are wrong, and there is no manifestation of approval or favor on the part of God towards the soul. But when we take our true place and feel our ill-desert, and look upon pardoning mercy as a mere gratuity, we find access to God and his love is shed abroad in

our hearts, producing that peace which passes all understanding. The soul ceases from its legal strivings; it gives over the vain attempt to make itself worthy, or to work out a righteousness with which to appear before God. It is contented to be accepted as unworthy, and to receive as a gift, a righteousness which can bear the scrutiny of God. Peace, therefore, is not the result of the assurance of mere pardon, but of pardon founded upon a righteousness which illustrates the character of God, which magnifies the law and makes it honorable; which satisfies the justice of God while it displays the infinite riches of divine tenderness and love. The soul can find no objection to such a method of forgiveness. It is not pained by the ascription of merit to itself, which is felt to be undeserved. Its utter unworthiness is not only recognized but openly declared. Nor is it harassed by the anxious doubt whether God can forgive sin, consistent with his justice. For justice is as clearly revealed in the cross of Christ, as love. The whole soul, therefore, however enlightened, or however sensitive, acquiesces with humility and delight in a plan of mercy which thus honors God, and which, while it secures the salvation of the sinner, permits Him to hide himself in the radiance which surrounds his Savior.

The apostles, moreover, urge on men the doctrine of justification by faith with peculiar earnestness because it presents the only method of deliverance from sin. So long as men are under the condemnation of the law, and feel themselves bound by its demands of obedience as the condition and ground of their acceptance with God, they do and *must* feel that He is unreconciled, that his perfections are arrayed

against them. Their whole object is to propitiate him by means which they know to be inadequate. Their spirit is servile, their religion a bondage, their God is a hard master. To men in such a state, true love, true obedience, and real peace are alike impossible. But when they are brought to see that God, through his infinite love, has set forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation for our sins, that He might be just, and yet justify those who believe; that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy that he saves us — they are then emancipated from their former bondage and made the sons of God. God is no longer a hard master, but a kind Father. Obedience is no longer a task to be done for a reward; it is the joyful expression of filial love. The whole relation of the soul to God is changed, and all our feelings and conduct change with it. Though we have no works to perform in order to obtain justification, we have everything to do in order to manifest our gratitude and love. Do we therefore make void the law through faith? God forbid! indeed, we establish the law. ^{Rom 3:31} There is no such thing as real, acceptable obedience until we are thus delivered from the bondage of the law as the rule of justification, and are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Till then we are slaves and enemies, and have the feelings of slaves. When we have accepted the terms of reconciliation, we are the sons of God and have the feelings of sons.

It must not, however, be supposed that the filial obedience rendered by the children of God, is the effect of the mere moral influence arising from a sense of His favor. Though perhaps it is the strongest influence which any external consideration can exert, it is far from

being the source of the holiness which always follows faith. The very act by which we become interested in the redemption of Christ from the condemnation of the law, makes us partakers of his Spirit. It is not mere pardon, nor any other isolated blessing that is offered to us in the gospel, but complete redemption, deliverance from evil, and restoration to the love and life of God. Therefore, those who believe, are not merely forgiven, but are so united to Christ, that they derive from and through him, the Holy Spirit. This is his great gift, bestowed on all who come to Him and confide in Him. This is the reason why he says, Without me, you can do nothing. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit. ^{Joh 15.4-5}

The gospel method of salvation, therefore, is worthy of all acceptance. It reveals the divine perfections in the clearest and most affecting light, and it is in every way suited to the character and necessities of men. It places us in our true position as undeserving sinners; and it secures pardon, peace of conscience, and holiness of life. It is the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. It cannot be a matter of surprise that the Scriptures represent the rejection of this method of redemption, as the prominent ground of the condemnation of those who perish under the sound of the gospel. That the plan should be so clearly revealed, and yet men should insist on adopting some other that is better suited to their inclinations, is the height of folly and disobedience. That the Son of God should come into the world; die the just for the unjust; and offer

us eternal life; and yet that we should reject his proffered mercy — this proves such an insensibility to his excellence and love, such a love for sin, such a disregard of the approval and enjoyment of God, that if all other grounds of condemnation could be removed, this alone would be sufficient. *He that does not believe, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* ^{Joh 3.18}

CHAPTER VI. FAITH.

Section I. Faith necessary in order for salvation. The nature of saving Faith.

However abundant and suitable the provision may be which God has made for the salvation of men, there are many who fail to attain eternal life. There are some whom Christ will profit nothing. Indeed, there are those whose condemnation will be greatly *aggravated* because they have known and rejected the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Therefore, it is not less necessary to know what we must do to secure an interest in the redemption of Christ, than it is to understand what he has done for our salvation.

If God has revealed a plan of salvation for sinners, then in order to be saved, they must acquiesce in its provisions. By whatever name it may be called, the thing to be done is to approve and accept the terms of salvation presented in the gospel. As the plan of redemption is designed for sinners, the reception of that plan on our part implies an acknowledgment that we are sinners, and justly exposed to the displeasure of God. To those who have no such sense of guilt, it must appear foolishness and an offense. As it proceeds on the assumption of the insufficiency of any obedience of our own to satisfy the demands of the law, acquiescence in it involves the renunciation of all dependence on our own righteousness as the ground of our acceptance with God. If salvation is of grace, then it must be received as such. To introduce our own merit in any form or to any degree, is

to *reject* it, because grace and works are essentially opposed. In trusting to the one, we renounce the other.

As *justification* is pardon and acceptance dispensed on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, acquiescence in the plan of salvation involves the recognition and acceptance of the work of Christ as the only ground of justification before God. However much the child of God may be perplexed with anxious doubts and vain endeavors, he is brought at last to see and admire the perfect simplicity of the plan of mercy. He finds that it requires nothing on his part but the acceptance of what is freely offered — the acceptance of it as free and unmerited. It is under the consciousness of ill-desert and helplessness, that the soul embraces Jesus Christ as he is presented in the gospel. This is what God requires of us in order for our justification. As soon as this is done, we are united to Christ; he assumes our responsibilities; he pleads our cause; and he secures our pardon and acceptance on the ground of what he has done; so that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The nature of the duty required of us in order for our justification, is made still more plain, if possible, by the account which the Bible gives of those who are condemned. They are described as those who reject Christ, who go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God; as those who look to the law or their own works, instead of relying on the work of Christ. They are those who reject the counsel of God against themselves who, being ignorant of their character and the requirements of God,

refuse to be saved by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The word by which this acceptance of Christ is commonly expressed in the Bible, is faith. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life. He that believes in him is not condemned; but he that does not believe is condemned already. He that believes in the Son has everlasting life; he that does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he that believes in me has everlasting life. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that does not believe shall be damned. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? and they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. God is just and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. The Gentiles have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel has not attained it, because they did not seek it by faith. Knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. This is his commandment, That we should believe in his son Jesus Christ. He that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.

Language so plain and so varied as this, cannot be misunderstood. It teaches every serious inquirer after the way of life, that in order for

salvation, he must believe in Jesus Christ. Still, though he knows what it is to believe, as well as anyone can tell him, yet as he reads of a dead faith, as well as of a living faith, a faith of devils and a faith of God's elect; as he reads on one page that he that believes shall be saved, and on another, that Simon himself believed, and yet remained in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, he is often greatly perplexed and at a loss to determine what that faith is which is connected with salvation. This is a difficulty which is inseparable from the use of language. The soul of man is so wonderful in its operations; its perceptions, emotions, and affections are so various and so complicated, that it is impossible for there to be a different word for every distinct exercise. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the same word should be used to express different states of mind, which have certain prominent characteristics in common. The definite, in distinction from the general or comprehensive meaning of the word, is determined by the context; by explanatory or equivalent expressions; by the nature of the thing spoken of; and by the effects ascribed to it. This is found sufficient for all the purposes of intercourse and instruction. We can speak without being misunderstood, of loving our food, of loving an infant, of loving a parent, of loving God, though in each of these cases the word *love* represents a state of mind peculiar to itself, and different from all the others. There is in all of them a pleasurable excitement upon the perception of certain qualities; and this we call *love*, though no two states of mind can well be more distinct than the complacent fondness with which a parent looks upon his infant, and the adoring reverence with which he turns his soul towards God.

We need not be surprised, therefore, that the word *faith* is used in Scripture to express very different exercises, or states of mind. In its widest sense, faith is an assent to truth upon the exhibition of evidence. It does not seem necessary that this evidence should be of the nature of testimony; for we are commonly and properly said to believe whatever we regard as true. We believe in the existence and attributes of God, though our assent is not founded upon what is strictly called testimony. But if faith means assent to truth, it is obvious that its nature and attendants must vary with the nature of the truth believed, and especially with the nature of the evidence upon which our assent is founded. A man may assent to the proposition that the earth moves round its axis, that virtue is good, that sin will be punished, that God promises salvation to him, as a believer. In all these cases there is *assent*, and therefore *faith*; but the state of mind expressed by the term is not always the same. Assent to a speculative or abstract truth is a speculative act; assent to a moral truth is a moral act; assent to a promise made to ourselves is an act of trust. Our belief that the earth moves round its axis is a mere assent. Our belief in the excellence of virtue is, in its nature, a moral judgment. Our belief of a promise is an act of trust. Or if any choose to say that trust is the result of assent to the truth of the promise, it may be admitted as a mere matter of analysis; but the distinction is of no consequence because the two things are inseparable, and because the Scriptures don't make the distinction. In the language of the Bible, faith in the promises of God is a believing *reliance*, and no blessing is connected with mere assent, as distinguished and separated from reliance.

It is, however, of more consequence to remark that the nature of the act by which we assent to truth, is modified by the kind of evidence upon which our assent is founded. The blind may believe, on the testimony of others, in the existence of colors; and the deaf in the harmony of sounds; but their faith is very different from the faith of those who enjoy the exercise of the sense of sight or hearing. The universal reputation of such men as Bacon and Newton, and the acknowledged influence of their writings, may be the foundation of a very rational conviction of their intellectual superiority. But a conviction founded upon the perusal and appreciation of their own works, is of an essentially different character. We may believe in the testimony of those in whose veracity and judgment we confide; or that a man of whom we know nothing has great moral excellence. But if we see for ourselves the exhibition of his excellence, we believe for *other* reasons, and in a *different* way. The state of mind, therefore, which in the language of common life and in that of the sacred Scriptures, is expressed by the word *faith*, varies essentially with the nature of the evidence upon which our belief rests.

One man believes the Bible to be the word of God, and the facts and doctrines contained in it to be true, simply on the testimony of others. Born in a Christian land and taught by his parents to regard the Scriptures as a revelation from God, he yields a general assent to the truth, without troubling himself with any personal examination into the evidence upon which it rests. Another believes because he has investigated the subject. He sees that there is no rational way of accounting for the miracles, the accomplishment of predictions, the

success and influence of the gospel, except upon the assumption of its divine origin. Others, again, believe because the truths of the Bible commend themselves to their reason and conscience, and accord with their inward experience. Those whose faith rests upon this foundation, often receive the word with joy; they do many things, and have much of the appearance of true Christians; or like Felix, they believe and tremble. This is the foundation of the faith which often surprises the wicked in their last hours. Men who all their lives have neglected or reviled the truth, and who may have accumulated a treasury of objections to the authority of the Scriptures, are often brought to believe by a power which they cannot resist. An awakened conscience affirms the truth with an authority before which they quail. Their doubts and sophistries fly frightened before the majesty of this new revealed witness for the truth. To disbelieve is now impossible. That there is a God, that he is holy and just, and that there is a hell, they would give the world to doubt, but cannot. Here is a faith very different in its origin, nature, and effects from that which rests upon the authority of men, or upon external evidence and argument.

Though the faith just described, is generally most strikingly exhibited at the approach of death, it often happens that men who are habitually careless, are suddenly arrested in their career. Their conscience is aroused and enlightened. They feel those things to be true, which before they either denied or disregarded. The truth, therefore, has great power over them. It destroys their former peace. It forces them to self-denial and the performance of religious duties.

Sometimes this influence soon wears off, as conscience subsides into its accustomed slumber. At others, it continues long, even to the end of life. It then constitutes that spirit of bondage and fear under which its unhappy subjects endeavor to work out a way to heaven, without embracing the gospel of the grace of God. The effects produced by a faith of this kind, though specifically different from the fruits of the Spirit, are not always easily detected by the eye of man. And hence many who appear outwardly to be the children of God, are inwardly under the dominion of a spirit that is the opposite of the loving, confiding, filial temper of the gospel.

There is a faith different from any of those forms of belief which have yet been mentioned. It is a faith which rests upon the manifestation by the Holy Spirit, of the excellence, beauty, and suitableness of the truth. This is what Peter calls the *precious faith* of God's elect. ^{2Pet 1.1} It arises from a spiritual apprehension of the truth, or from the testimony of the Spirit with and by the truth in our hearts. The Scriptures make frequent mention of this faith. Christ said, I thank you, Father Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. ^{Luk 10.21} The external revelation was made equally to the wise and to babes. To the latter, however, was granted an inward illumination which enabled them to see the excellence of the truth, which commanded their joyful assent. Our Savior therefore added, No man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son reveals him. ^{Mat 11.27} When Peter made his confession of faith in Christ, our Savior said to him, Blessed are

you, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ^{Mat 16.17} Paul was a persecutor of the church; but when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, he at once preached the faith which before, he destroyed. He had an *external* knowledge of Christ before; but he experienced this *internal* revelation on his way to Damascus, and it effected an instant change in his whole character. There was nothing miraculous or peculiar in the conversion of the apostle, except in the mere incidental circumstances of his case. He speaks of all believers as having the same divine illumination. God, he says, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. ^{2Cor 4.6}

On the other hand, he speaks of those whose minds the god of this world has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ^{2Cor 4.4} In the second chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, he dwells much upon this subject, and teaches not only that the true divine wisdom of the gospel was undiscoverable by human wisdom, but that when externally revealed, we need the Spirit so that we may know the things freely given to us by God. For the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. ^{1Cor 2.12,}
¹⁴ Hence the apostle prays for his readers, that the eyes of their understandings (hearts) might be opened, that they might know the hope of their calling, the riches of their inheritance, and the

greatness of the divine power of which they were the subjects. Eph 1.18-
19 And in another place, that they might be filled with the knowledge
of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Col 1.9 By
spiritual understanding is meant that insight into the nature of the
truth, which is the result of the influence of the Spirit upon the heart.
Since faith is founded on this spiritual apprehension, Paul says, he
didn't preach with the enticing words of man's wisdom, because a
faith which resulted from such preaching could be at best a rational
conviction; but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that
the faith of his hearers might stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in
the power of God. 1Cor 2.4-5 Hence, faith is said to be one of the fruits
of the Spirit, the gift of God, the result of His operation. 10 These
representations of the Scriptures accord with the experience of the
people of God. They know that their faith is not founded upon the
testimony of others, nor exclusively or mainly upon external
evidence. They believe because the truth appears to them to be both
true and good — because they feel its power and experience its
consolations.

It is obvious that a faith founded upon the spiritual apprehension of
the truth, as it differs from every other kind of belief in its origin, it
must also differ in its effects. Of the multitudes who believe the
Scriptures upon authority, or on the ground of external evidence,
how large a portion disregard their precepts and warnings! To say
that such persons do not believe, although it is true in one sense, is
not true in another. They *do* believe; and to assert the contrary is to
contradict their consciousness. In the Bible, the state of mind which

they exhibit, is called faith, though it is dead. In other cases, this rational conviction, combined with other causes, produces that decorous attention to the duties of religion, and that general propriety of conduct, which are so often exhibited by the hearers of the gospel. The faith which is founded on the power of conscience produces still more marked effects: either temporary obedience and joy, or the despair and opposition manifested by the convinced, the dying, and the lost; or that laborious slavery of religion which we have already spoken of.

But that faith which is the *gift of God*, which arises from His opening our eyes to see the excellence of the truth, is attended with joy and love. These feelings are as immediately and necessarily attendant on this kind of faith, as pleasure is upon the perception of beauty. Hence faith is said to work by love. And as all revealed truth is the object of the faith of which we now speak, every truth must, in proportion to the strength of our faith, produce its appropriate effect upon the heart. A belief of the being and perfections of God, founded upon the apprehension of his glory, must produce love, reverence, and confidence, with a desire to be conformed to his image. Hence the apostle says: We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord. ^{2Cor 3.18} Faith in his threatenings, founded upon a perception of their justice, their harmony with his perfections, and the ill-desert of sin, must produce fear and trembling. His people, therefore, are described as those who tremble at his word. Faith in his promises, founded upon the apprehension of

his faithfulness and power, their harmony with all his revealed purposes, their suitableness to our nature and necessities, must produce confidence, joy, and hope. This was the faith which made Abraham leave his own country to go to a strange land; which led Moses to esteem the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. This was the faith of David also, of Samuel, and of all the prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ^{Heb 11.33-34} This is the faith which leads all the people of God to confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and that they look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ^{Heb 11.10} This is the faith which overcomes the world, which leads the believer to set his affections on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; ^{Col 3.1} which enables him to glory even in tribulation, while he doesn't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. ^{2Cor 4.18}

And what shall we say of a faith in Jesus Christ founded upon the apprehension of the glory of God, as it shines in Him; which beholds that glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth; which contemplates the Redeemer as clothed in our nature; the first-born of many brethren; as dying for our sins, rising again for our justification, ascending into heaven and as now seated

at the right hand of God, where he ever lives to make intercession for us? *Such a faith*, the apostle tells us, *must produce love*, for he says, Who having not seen you love, and in whom, though now you do not see him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The soul gladly receives him as a Savior in all the characters and for all the purposes for which he is revealed; and naturally desires to be conformed to his will, and to make known the unsearchable riches of his grace to others. [11](#)

It is no less obvious that no one can believe the representations given in the Scriptures respecting the character of man and the ill-desert of sin, with a faith founded upon a right apprehension of the holiness of God and the evil of his own heart, without experiencing self-condemnation, self-abhorrence, and a constant hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thus, of all the truths in the word of God, it maybe said that so far as they are believed in virtue of this spiritual apprehension, they will exert their appropriate influence upon the heart and consequently upon the life. That such a faith should not produce good fruits, is as impossible as that the sun should give light without heat. This faith is the living head of all right affections and of all holy living; without it, all religion is a dull formality, a slavish drudgery, or at best a rationalistic homage. Hence we are said to live by faith, to walk by faith, to be sanctified by faith, to overcome by faith, to be saved by faith. And the grand characteristic of the people of God is that they are Believers.

Section II. Faith as connected with justification.

What has been said up to here is designed to illustrate the nature of saving faith as it is represented in the Scriptures. It differs from all other acts of the mind to which the term *faith* is applied, mainly on account of the nature of the evidence on which it is founded. The Bible, however, is more definite in its instructions on this subject. Besides teaching us that there is a faith which receives as true all the declarations of God, in virtue of evidence exhibited and applied by the Holy Spirit, it tells us what those particular acts of faith are, which secure our justification before God. It plainly teaches that we are justified by those acts of faith which have a special reference to Christ and his mediatorial work. Thus we are said to be justified by faith in his blood. ^{Rom 3.25} The righteousness of God is said to be by faith in Jesus Christ; ^{Rom 3.22} that is, by faith of which he is the object. This expression occurs frequently. Knowing, says the apostle, that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. ^{Gal 2.16} Not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. ^{Phi 3.9} In all these places and in many others of a similar kind, it is expressly stated that Christ is the object of justifying faith. The same doctrine is taught in those numerous passages, in which

justification or salvation is connected with believing in Christ. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ^{Joh 3.16} He that believes in the Son has everlasting life. ^{Joh 3.36} Whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins. ^{Act 10.43} Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. ^{Act 16.31}

The same truth is involved in all the representations of the method of justification given in the word of God. We are said to be justified by the death of Christ, by the blood of his cross, by the redemption that is in him, by the sacrifice of himself, by his bearing our sins, by his obedience, or righteousness. All these representations imply that Christ, in his mediatorial character, is the special object of justifying faith. It is indeed impossible that any man should believe the record which God has given of his Son, without believing every other record which He has given, so far as it is known and apprehended. Still, the special act of faith which is connected with our *justification*, is belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior from sin. And when we are commanded to believe in Jesus Christ, the Scriptural meaning of the expression is that we should trust, or confide in him. It does not express mere assent to the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, which angels and devils exercise; ^{Mat 8.29} but it expresses *trust* which involves knowledge and assent. To believe in Christ as a propitiation for sin, is to receive and confide in him as such.

From this representation it is clear what we must do to be saved. When the mind is perplexed and anxious from a sense of sin and the accusations of conscience; when the troubled spirit looks round for

some way of escape from the just displeasure of God, the voice of mercy from the lips of the Son of God is, *Come to me, Believe in me, Submit to be saved by me*. Till this is done, nothing is done. And when this cordial act of faith in Christ is exercised, we are accepted for his sake, and he undertakes to save us from the dominion and condemnation of our sins. The experience of the people of God, when they are made the recipients of that divine illumination which reveals to them the glory of God, their own unworthiness, and the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, is no doubt very various. It is modified by their previous knowledge, by their peculiar state of mind, by the particular truth which happens to attract their attention, by the clearness of the manifestation, and by many other circumstances. This diversity is readily admitted; yet, since no man can come to the Father but by the Son; since without faith in him there is no forgiveness and no access to God, it must still be true that — with greater or less distinctness of apprehension — Christ and his mediatorial work constitute the object of the first gracious exercises of the renewed soul. Any approach to God, any hope of his favor, any peace of conscience or confidence of pardon, that is not founded upon him, must be delusive. Having (that is, *because* we have) such a High Priest, we come with boldness to the throne of grace; and this is the only ground on which we can venture to draw near. The whole plan of redemption shows that there is no pardon, no access to God, no peace or reconciliation, except through Jesus Christ. And this idea is so constantly presented in the Bible, that all genuine religious experience must be in accordance with it.

It is, however, of such vital importance for the sinner to distinctly understand what it is that is required of him, that God has graciously so illustrated the nature of saving faith, that the most illiterate reader of the Scriptures may learn the way of life. It is not merely by the term *faith*, or *believing*, that this act of the soul is expressed, but by many others of equivalent import. The consideration of a few of these will serve to explain more distinctly the plan of salvation, by showing at once the nature, object, and office of *justifying faith*.

One of the most comprehensive and intelligible of these equivalent terms is that of *receiving*. To as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God. ^{Joh 1.12} As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. ^{Col 2.6} Believers are therefore described as those who receive the gift of righteousness; ^{Rom 5.17} as those who gladly receive the word. ^{Act 2.41} To receive Jesus Christ is to accept and recognize him in the character in which he presents himself: as the Son of God, the Savior of sinners, as a propitiation for our sins, as a ransom for our souls, as the Lord our righteousness. He came to his own and his own did not receive him. The Jews would not recognize him as the Messiah, the only mediator between God and man, as the end of the law for righteousness. They denied the Holy One, and put far from them the offer of life through him. Could the nature, the object, or office of faith be presented more clearly than they are by this representation? Can the soul, anxious about salvation, doubt what it has to do? Jesus Christ is presented to him in the gospel as the Son of God, clothed in our nature, sent by the Father to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting

righteousness, to redeem us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. All we have to do, is receive him *in this character*; and those who thus receive him he makes the sons of God — that is, the objects of his favor, the subjects of his grace, and the heirs of his kingdom.

A still simpler illustration of the nature of faith is contained in those passages in which we are commanded to look to God. Look to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth. ^{Isa 45.22} Our Savior avails himself of this figure, when he says, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ^{Joh 3.14-15} The dying Israelite, who was commanded to turn his feeble eye on the brazen serpent, was surely at no loss to know the nature of the duty required of him. He knew there was no virtue in the act of looking. He might look in vain all round the wide horizon. He was healed, not for *looking*, but because the serpent was placed there by the command of God, and salvation made to depend upon *submitting* to the appointed method of relief. Why then should the soul convinced of sin and misery be in doubt as to what it has to do? Christ has been set forth as crucified; and we are commanded to look to him and be saved. Can anything be simpler? Must not every attempt to render more intelligible the Savior's beautiful illustration, serve only to darken counsel by words without wisdom? ^{Job 38.2}

Another striking illustration of this subject may be found in Heb 6.18, where believers are described as those who have fled for refuge

to lay hold of the hope set before them. As of old, the manslayer, when pursued by the avenger of blood, fled to the city of refuge, whose gates were open night and day, and whose highways were always unincumbered. So the soul, under the sense of its guilt and convinced that it must perish if it remains where it is, flees to Jesus Christ as the appointed refuge, and finds peace and security in him. There the avenger cannot touch him; there the law which before declared vengeance, spreads its ample shield around him and gives him the assurance of safety.

A still more common method of expressing the act of saving faith, is to be found in such passages as Joh 6.35. He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall never thirst. All that the Father gives to me shall come to me; and whoever comes to me I will in no wise cast out. Here *coming* and *believing* are interchanged as expressing the same idea. So also in the following chapter, where our Savior says, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He that believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters. Hence the invitations and commands of the gospel are often expressed by this word. Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ^{Mat 11.28} And in the closing invitation of the sacred volume, The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely. ^{Rev 22.17}

Though this language is so plain that nothing but the illumination of the Spirit can render it plainer, yet the troubled soul perplexes itself

with the inquiry, *What is it*, to come to Christ? Though assured that he is not far from any one of us, we are often forced to cry out, O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he works, but I cannot behold him; he hides himself on the right hand, so that I cannot see him. It is often the very simplicity of the requirement that deceives us. We think we must do some great thing, which will bear a certain proportion to the blessing connected with it. We cannot believe that it is merely *looking*, merely *receiving*, merely *coming* as the prodigal came to his father, or as the Israelite came to the high priest who was appointed to make atonement for the sins of the people. Yet is it even thus that we must come to the High Priest of our profession, with confession of sin, and there submit to the application of his blood as the appointed means of pardon, and rejoice in the assurance of the divine favor. Or still more impressively, as the Hebrew believer came to the altar, laid his hand with confession upon the head of the victim, and saw it die in his stead, so does the trembling soul come to Christ as its propitiatory sacrifice; and confiding in the efficacy of his death, he looks up to God and says, *My Father!* Coming to Christ, therefore, is the confiding reception of him in the offices and for the purposes for which he is presented in the word of God — as our mediator and priest, as our advocate with the Father, as our Redeemer and Lord.

Another term by which faith is expressed is *submitting*. This is not to be understood as meaning a submission to the will of God as a

sovereign ruler, giving up all our controversy with him, and resigning ourselves into his hands. All this is *duty*, but it is not *saving faith*. The submission required is submission to the revealed plan of salvation; it is giving up all excuses for our sins, all dependence on our own righteousness, and submitting to the righteousness which God has provided for our justification. This is what the Jews refused to do, and so they perished in unbelief.¹² *This is what we must do in order to be saved.* Men, when sensible of their guilt and danger, are perplexed and anxious about many things. But there is only one thing for them to do. They must submit to be saved as ungodly, as sinners, as entirely undeserving, solely for Christ's sake. They must consent to allow the robe of his righteousness to be cast over all their nakedness and blood, that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. Then will they be prepared to join that great multitude which stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb! For you were slain, and have redeemed us unto God by your blood, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, and have made us unto our God, kings and priests.

It is thus that the Bible answers the question, What must we do to be saved? We are told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And to set forth the nature, object and office of this faith, the Scriptures employ the most significant terms and illustrations. This is in order that we may learn to renounce ourselves and our works, and to be found in

Christ, depending solely upon what He has done and suffered as the ground of our acceptance with God. Those who thus believe, have passed from death unto life; they are no longer under condemnation; they have peace with God and rejoice in hope of his glory. As this faith *unites* them with Christ, it makes them not only partakers of his death, but of his life. The Holy Spirit given to him without measure, is given to them *through* him; and it works in them the fruits of holiness, which are to the praise and glory of God.

CHAPTER VII. REPENTANCE.

Clearly, the Scriptures teach that whoever believes shall be saved; they teach no less clearly that *unless we repent, we shall all perish*.
^{Luk 13.3} These graces are not only alike indispensable, but they cannot exist separately. Repentance is turning from sin to God, through Jesus Christ; and faith is the acceptance of Christ in order to return to God. Repentance is the act of a *believer*; and faith is the act of a *penitent*. So that whoever believes repents; and whoever repents believes.

The primary and simple meaning of the word commonly used in the New Testament to express the idea of repentance, is a *change of mind* as the result of *reflection*. In this sense, it is said, There is no repentance with God. He is not a man that he should repent.^{Num 23.19} In the same sense, it is said that Esau found no place for repentance when he was unable to effect a change in the determination of his father. In the ordinary religious sense of the term, it is turning from sin to God. This is the account commonly given of it in the word of God. I thought upon my ways, said the Psalmist, and turned my feet to your testimonies.^{Psa 119.59} When the wicked man turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and does what is lawful and right, he will save his soul alive.^{Eze 18.27} Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the

Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ^{Isa 55.7} And in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, Solomon said, If the people think to themselves in the land to which they were carried away captives, and will repent and make supplication to you, saying, We have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness, and so they return to you with all their heart and with all their soul; then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven, your dwelling place, and maintain their cause. ^{1Kng 8.47, 49} To repent, then, is to turn from sin to God. But as there is a repentance which has no connection with salvation, it becomes us to search the Scriptures, so that we may learn the characteristics of that repentance which is unto life.

As conviction of sin is an essential part of repentance, and as that point has already been considered, it won't be necessary to dwell long on this general subject. The prominence given to it in the Scriptures, however, and the large share which it occupies in the experience of Christians, demand that the nature of this turning from sin, which is so often enjoined, should be carefully studied.

There is one general truth in relation to this point which is clearly taught in the Bible; and it is that all true repentance springs from right views of God. The language of Job may with more or less confidence be adopted by every Christian: I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes. ^{Job 42.5-6}

The discovery of the justice of God serves to awaken conscience, and it often produces a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation. ^{Heb 10.27} This is the natural and reasonable effect of a clear apprehension of the rectitude of the divine character, as of a judge who renders to everyone his due. Accordingly, there are many illustrations of the effects of this apprehension recorded in the Scriptures. Fearfulness and trembling, said the Psalmist, have fallen upon me; and horror has overwhelmed me. ^{Psa 55.5} While I suffer your terrors, I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me. Your terrors have cut me off. ^{Psa 88.15} There is no rest in my bones because of my sins. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. ^{Psa 38.4} These fearful forebodings are so common in the experience of the people of God, that the earlier writers make terror of conscience a prominent part of repentance. There are, however, two remarks on this subject, which should be borne in mind. The first is that these exercises vary in degree from the intolerable anguish of despair, to the calm conviction of our judgment that we are justly exposed to the displeasure of God. And secondly, that there is nothing discriminating in these terrors of conscience. They are experienced by the righteous and the unrighteous. If they occurred in the repentance of David, they also did in that of Judas. Sinners in Zion are often afraid; and fearfulness often surprises the hypocrite. These fearful apprehensions, therefore, are not to be desired for their own sake, since there is nothing good in fear. It is reasonable that those who refuse to repent, and to accept the offers of mercy, *should* fear. But there is nothing reasonable in those fears which arise from

unbelief, or distrust of the promises of God. It so often happens in the experience of the people of God, however, that they are made sensible of their guilt and danger, before they have any clear apprehensions of the plan of redemption — in fact, fear of the wrath of God enters largely into the feelings which characterize their conversion. The apprehension of the holiness of God produces awe. The angels in heaven are represented as veiling their faces, and bowing with reverence before the Holy One. Something of the same feeling must be excited in the minds of men by the discovery of His infinite purity. It cannot fail to excite awe, no matter what the state of his mind may be. This, however, may be mingled with love, and express itself in adoration; or it may co-exist with hatred, and express itself in blasphemy. Very often, the effect is simply awe (or at least this is the prominent emotion), and the soul is led to prostrate itself in the dust. The moral character of this emotion can only be determined by observing whether it is attended with satisfaction in the contemplation of infinite purity, and with a desire for larger and more constant discoveries of it — or whether it produces uneasiness, and a desire that the vision may be withdrawn, and we be allowed to remain at ease in our darkness.

In the next place, this discovery of the holiness of God cannot fail to produce a sense of our own *unworthiness*. It is in His light that we see light. It is by the apprehension of his excellence that we learn our own vileness. And as no man can be aware that he appears vile in the sight of others, without a sense of shame, we find that this emotion is described as being one of the most uniform attendants upon

repentance. Thus Ezra, in his penitential prayer, says, O my God! I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to you my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass has grown up to the heavens. ^{Ezr 9.6} Daniel expresses the same feeling when he says, O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us shame of face, as at this day. ^{Dan 9.7} And when He describes the restoration of his people, even when assuring them of pardon, God says, You shall know that I am the Lord, that you may be confounded and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified towards you for all that you have done, says the Lord God. ^{Eze 16.63}

Just as the consciousness of unworthiness produces shame, when we think of others, so when we think of ourselves, it produces self-aborrence. This latter feeling, therefore, also enters into the nature of true repentance. In the strong language of the suffering patriarch already quoted, the sinner abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes. In another passage, Job 40.4, the same distinguished servant of God says, Behold I am vile; what will I answer you? I will lay my hand on my mouth. And the prophet describing the repentance of the people says, You shall remember your ways and all your doings in which you have been defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all the evil that you have committed. ^{Eze 20.43} It is not the strength, but the nature of these feelings, which determines the character of our repentance. Their nature is the same in all true penitents; but their strength varies in every particular case. In all, however, the sense of sin destroys that self-complacency with which

sinner soothe themselves, thanking God they are not as other men. ^{Luk 18.11} It humbles them before God, and places them in the position which he would have them occupy. To this man I will look, says the Lord, even to the one who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word. ^{Isa 66.2} With such a soul God condescends to take up his abode. For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. ^{Isa 57.15}

This humbling sense of our unworthiness, which produces true contrition and self-abasement, is essential to repentance. Most men are willing to acknowledge they are sinners; but they are at the same time disposed to extenuate their guilt; to think they are as good as could reasonably be expected; that the law of God demands too much of beings so frail as man; and that it would be unjust to visit their deficiencies with any severe punishment. The change which constitutes repentance destroys this disposition to self-justification. The soul bows down before God under the consciousness of inexcusable guilt. It stands self-condemned; and instead of regarding God as a hard master, it acknowledges that He is righteous in all his demands, and in all his judgments. Such were the feelings of David when he said, I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight, that you might be justified when you speak, and clear when you judge. ^{Psa 51.4} The same feeling is expressed by Ezra: O

Lord God of Israel you are righteous behold, we are before you in our trespasses, for we cannot stand before you because of this. ^{Ezr 9.15} And Nehemiah uses language to the same effect: You are just in all that is brought upon us; for you have done right, but we have done wickedly. ^{Neh 9.33} There can be no true repentance, therefore, without this contrite spirit of self-condemnation and abasement.

The confession of sin, on which the Scriptures lay so much stress, is the outward expression of this inward sense of ill-desert. It is not enough that we secretly condemn ourselves. God requires a full and ingenuous confession of our sins. And this our own hearts will prompt us to make. As there is no desire in the penitent to extenuate his guilt, so there is no disposition to conceal it. On the contrary, the soul is anxious to acknowledge everything; to take shame to itself, and to justify God. We accordingly find that a large part of the penitential portions of the Scriptures is taken up in recording the confessions of the people of God. When I kept silence, said the Psalmist, my bones waxed old through my roaring all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I have not hidden my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord; and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. ^{Psa 32.5} So long as he attempted to conceal his guilt, he found no relief; the hand of God continued to press heavily upon him; but when he acknowledged his transgressions he obtained forgiveness. The wise man therefore says, He that covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoever confesses and forsakes them, shall find mercy. ^{Pro 28.13} The

New Testament is equally explicit as to this part of our duty. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ^{1Joh 1.8-9}

This confession must be made to the person against whom we have sinned. If we have sinned against our fellow men, we must confess to them. If we have sinned against the church, we must confess to the church; and if we have sinned against God, our confession must be made to God. The Old Testament, in commanding restitution in case of injury done to our neighbor, thereby commanded acknowledgement to be made to the injured party. And in the New Testament we are required to confess our faults one to another. ^{Jas 5.16} However, as the great majority of our sins are committed against God, it is to him that our confessions are to be principally made. And even in those cases in which we sin against men, in a still higher sense, we sin against God. Our sense of guilt in his sight, therefore, will prevail over the sense of our injustice to those whom we have offended. Thus David, though he had in the most grievous manner sinned against his neighbor, he was so affected with the enormity of his sin as committed against God, that he said, Against you, you only have I sinned and done this evil in your sight. ^{Psa 51.4}

In the inspired records of penitential sorrow, we accordingly find that confession is constantly made to God. Let your ear now be attentive, said Nehemiah, and your eyes open, that you may hear the prayer of your servant, which I pray before you now, day and night,

for the children of Israel your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against you. Both I and my father's house have sinned, and have dealt very corruptly against you; we have not kept the commandments, or the statutes, nor the judgments which You commanded your servant Moses. ^{Neh 1.6} Indeed, the greater portion of the remarkable prayers of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah which form the most authentic record of the exercises of genuine repentance, is taken up with confessions of sin. This shows how essential such confession is to the proper discharge of this duty. No man, therefore, whose heart does not lead him freely, fully, and humbly to acknowledge his sin before God, can have any satisfactory evidence that he truly repents.

There is indeed a confession which remorse extorts from the lips of those whose hearts know nothing of that godly sorrow which is unto life. Thus Judas went to his accomplices in treachery and said, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood; then he went and hanged himself. This, however, is very different from that ingenuous acknowledgment of sin which flows from a broken spirit, and which is fuller and freer, the stronger the assurance of forgiveness.

Though the Scriptures plainly teach that in all true repentance there is a sense of sin, self-loathing, self-condemnation, sorrow, and confession, yet such is the poverty of human language, that these very terms may be — no, *must* be employed to express the exercises of those who do *not* truly repent. It is said of Judas that he repented; ^{Mat 27:3} and we cannot doubt that his repentance included a

conviction of guilt, sorrow, self-abhorrence and confession. Yet all this was nothing more than the operation of that impenitent remorse which often drives men to despair, and which serves to feed the fire that will never be quenched. Although we are forced to describe the exercises which attend the sorrow of the world, by the same terms as those which accompany the sorrow which is of God, they are nevertheless essentially different in their nature. There is a gleam of hope and a glow of love pervading the exercises of the true penitent, which impart to all his exercises a peculiarity of character, and cause them to produce effects specifically different from those which flow from despairing remorse, or the agitations of an awakened conscience. His views of the justice and holiness of God produce not only a conviction of sin and sorrow for having committed it, but also an earnest desire to be delivered from it as the greatest of all *evils*, and an anxious longing after conformity to the image of God, as the greatest of all *blessings*. The repentance of the ungodly consists in the operations of conscience combined with fear; the repentance of the godly, consists of the operations of conscience combined with love. The one is the sorrow of the malefactor; the other the sorrow of a child. The one tends to despair and opposition to God; the other to hope and a desire for His favor. Both may lead to obedience; but the obedience in the one case is slavish; in the other, it is filial. In the one case it is mere penance; in the other it is repentance.

The circumstance which perhaps most perceptibly distinguishes true repentance from mere conviction and remorse, is that the former flows from the apprehension of the mercy of God. There is no hope in

the repentance of the ungodly. They may see by the light of conscience and of the divine law, that their sins are exceedingly great. They may be filled with terror from the apprehension of divine justice, and even humbled and confounded under a view of the infinite holiness of God and of their own vileness; but there is no sense of forgiving mercy, no apprehension of the divine favor. Instead of turning towards God, they therefore turn *from* him. Following the example of Adam, they would gladly hide themselves from His presence. And so terrible is that presence at times, that they madly seek a refuge from it in the darkness of the grave, or call upon the rocks and mountains to cover them. This is the sorrow that works death. But in every case of real turning to God, there is more or less distinct apprehension of His mercy. This may be so feeble as only to enable the soul to say, Though he slay me, yet I will trust Him; ^{Job} 13:15 or, Who knows if He will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him? ^{Joe} 2:14 or, to adopt the language of David, If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back. But if he says, 'I have no pleasure in him,' here I am; let him do to me as seems good to him. ^{2Sam} 15:25-26 This, however, is sufficient to turn fear into hope, and rebellion into submission.

It may be that the hope which saves the soul from sinking into despair and which prevents it from turning from God in aggravated opposition, is at times nothing more than a conviction that He is merciful, without any distinct apprehension of the way in which his mercy can be exercised, or any confident persuasion of our own acceptance. Still, the soul believes that He is the Lord, the Lord God,

merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. ^{Exo 34.6} It has courage to adopt the language of the Psalmist: For you, God, are good and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy to all those who call upon you. ^{Psa 86.5} In all the records of penitence contained in the Scriptures, we therefore find that recognition of the divine goodness is the great operative principle in turning the soul to God. Thus Nehemiah says, You are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. ^{Neh 9.17} And the prophet presents this consideration as the great motive to those whom he calls to repentance; Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for he is gracious and relents from harm. ^{Joe 2.13}

But inasmuch as there can be no confidence of forgiving mercy if it is not founded on the revelation of the *purpose* of God; and as there is no revelation of a purpose to pardon, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ — however indistinct the view may be, at times, which the soul takes of the plan of salvation — there must still be a reference to the Savior in all authorized expectations of mercy. The penitent may not know how God can be just and yet be the justifier of sinners, but he can be persuaded not only that He is merciful, but that He has found a ransom, and can without inconsistency save us from going down into the pit. Doubtless, however, under the light of the Gospel, it is far more common that the soul sees all that it reveals of the mercy of God, and of the possibility of pardon in the face of Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that God has revealed himself as reconciled to the world, not imputing to men their trespasses. It is

because Christ was made sin for us, that we can be made the righteousness of God in him.

All evangelical hope rests on the assurance that though we have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. This is the hope which is effectual in winning the soul back to God. It is the discovery of the love of God in giving his own Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish but have eternal life. It is *this* that breaks the hard heart, revealing to it the exceeding turpitude of its sins, and at the same time disclosing the readiness of God to freely forgive those who come to Him through Christ. It is therefore not so much the threatenings of the law, as the apprehension of the love of God, which turns the sinner from his rebellion, and draws him back to submission and obedience. All repentance without this, is legal and slavish. It is the repentance of Pharaoh, or Judas, or the thousands whom an awakened conscience and fear of wrath drive from their former sins, and force to walk in clanking chains along a mistaken road in search of heaven. This is the only repentance which conscience and the apprehension of divine justice can produce. A soul cannot approach an unreconciled God, any more than it can embrace a consuming fire. A sense of the favor of God, or a hope in His mercy, is essential to our returning to him with confidence and love.

There is indeed a belief in the mercy of God, which instead of leading men to repentance, encourages them to continue in sin. This is a

belief which arises out of ignorance. It is founded on a misapprehension of the character of God. It is easy for those who know nothing of the divine holiness and justice, and who look upon sin as a misfortune or a trifle, to believe that God will not be so severe as to mark iniquity. To such persons, the mercy of God seems a matter of course; restricting its offers to no class of men, but covering with its mantle, the sins of the penitent and of reprobate alike. As they see no reason why God should not forgive, they easily hope in his mercy. But when their eyes are opened to his immaculate purity which forbids his looking on sin with allowance; opened to his justice which forbids him to spare the guilty; to the strictness of his law and to the fearfulness of its penalty — when conscience is aroused and adds its sanction to the judgment of God, in a voice whose authority and power can neither be questioned nor evaded — then these hopes of mercy are seen to be like a spider's web. They are swept away in a moment; and the difficulty now is to believe that pardon, once thought so certain, is even possible. Hence the assurances that God is plenteous in mercy and ready to forgive are so numerous and earnest in the Scriptures. Hence the way in which mercy can be exercised, consistently with those attributes which are seen to enter into the essential excellence of God, is so clearly set forth. Hence the invitations, the promises, yes, even the *oath* of God, are given to beget hope in the mind of the convinced and humbled sinner. It is not the whole, but the sick, who need the physician; and it is not for the careless, who feel no need of pardon, but for the anxious, who fear that there is scarcely room for mercy, that these assurances are given.

Therefore, it is not that hope of mercy which springs from ignorance and indifference, which is operative in the work of repentance, but that which is founded upon the promises of God embraced by faith. It is an enlightened hope. The soul in entertaining it, knows something of the difficulties in the way of pardon, and something of the method in which mercy can be consistently exercised. Such a hope is not a matter of course; nor is it an easy attainment. The sense of sin, the testimony of conscience, the holiness of God, the honor of his law, are all apparently opposed to any reasonable expectation of forgiveness. And therefore, although the declarations of Scripture are so explicit on the subject, it often happens that the awakened sinner feels that though these declarations may be true in reference to *others*, they cannot be true as it regards *himself*. And when the goodness of God is revealed to him; when he sees the divine love surmounting all difficulties — no shipwrecked mariner surrounded by darkness and tossed by tempests, hails with greater joy the break of day, than such a soul hails the revelation of divine mercy. It is not merely joy; it is wonder, gratitude, and love that take possession of his soul, and fill him with the purpose of living devoted to God his Redeemer. It is this hope which gives new life to the soul, and accomplishes its return from the service of sin, to the service of God.

Hope in the mercy of God being thus important, it is the great design of the Bible to reveal the love of God to sinners, in order to bring them back from their apostasy. The sacred volume is full of instruction on this important subject. Every command to repent, implies a readiness on the part of God to forgive. Every institution of

divine worship implies that God is willing to receive those who return to him. Every instance of pardon mentioned in the Bible is left on record to show that there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. With the same view, He has given those declarations of his mercy, long-suffering, and love with which the Scriptures abound. And above all, for this purpose has he set forth his Son as a propitiation for our sins, that we may see not only that He is merciful, but how He can be merciful and yet just. These offers of mercy are made to all who hear the gospel, even to those whose sins are as scarlet, or red like crimson. And none lose the benefit of them who do not voluntarily and wickedly reject them — either carelessly supposing that they need no forgiveness, or unbelievingly refusing to accept pardon on the only terms on which it can be granted.

That repentance, therefore, which is unto life, is a *turning*; it is not being driven away from sin by fear and stress of conscience, but forsaking it as evil and hateful, with sincere sorrow, humility, and confession. It is returning to God because He is good and willing to forgive, and doing so with a determination to live in obedience to His commandments.

There are but two ways in which we can judge the genuineness of this change. The one is the comparison of our inward experience with the word of God; the other is the observation of its effects. Every man is conscious of his own feelings; attention and comparison will generally enable him to ascertain their character. He may tell whether he has had such views of the justice and holiness of God as

to produce a conviction of his own sinfulness and ill-desert; whether he has been forced to give up his self-complacency, and to feel that disapproval of his character and conduct which leads the soul to confess with shame and sorrow, its guilt and pollution in the sight of God. He may tell whether he has had such apprehensions of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ as to induce him to return to his heavenly Father, with a strong desire after his favor, and with a firm determination to live to His glory. These are the exercises which constitute repentance; and whoever is conscious of them, may know that he is turned from death unto life.

However, as true self-knowledge is the most difficult of all attainments; and as feelings are hard to detect in their true nature (unless they are unusually strong); the surest test of the character of any supposed change of heart is to be found in its *permanent effects*. By their fruits you shall know them, is a declaration as applicable to the right method of judging of ourselves, as of others. Therefore, whatever may have been our inward experience, and whatever joy or sorrow we may have felt — unless we bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, ^{Mat 3.8} our experience will profit us nothing. Our repentance needs to be repented of, unless it leads us to confession and restitution in cases of private injury; unless it causes us to forsake not merely our outward sins, which attract the notice of others, but those which lie concealed in the heart; unless it makes us choose the service of God, as that which is right and congenial, and causes us to live not for ourselves, but for Him who loved us and gave himself for us. ^{Gal 2.20}

There is no duty of which the necessity is either more obvious in itself, or more frequently asserted in the word of God, than that of repentance. Nature itself teaches us that when we have done wrong, we should be sorry for it, and turn away from the evil. Every man feels that this is a reasonable expectation in regard to those who have offended him. Every parent especially looks with anxiety for the repentance of a disobedient child; and he considers nothing worthy of the name, except sincere sorrow and a return to affectionate obedience. No man need wonder, therefore, that God — who requires nothing but what is right, and who can require nothing less — commands all men everywhere to repent. ^{Act 17:30} The salvation offered in the gospel, even though it is a salvation *of sinners*, is also a salvation *from sin*. The heaven which it promises, is a heaven of holiness. The rivers of pleasure which flow from the right hand of God, are filled with the pure waters of life. No man can therefore be saved, who does not by repentance, forsake his sins. This is itself a great part of salvation. The inward change of heart from the love and service of sin, to the love and service of God, is the great end of the death of Christ. He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ^{Eph 5:26-27} Therefore, a salvation for sinners, without repentance, is a contradiction.

Hence it is that *repentance is the burden of evangelical preaching*. Our Savior himself when he began to preach, said, Repent, for the

kingdom of God is at hand. ^{Mat 4.17} And when he came into Galilee preaching the gospel, he said, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel. ^{Mar 1.15} The commission which he gave his apostles was that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations. ^{Luk 24.47} In the execution of this commission, his disciples went forth and preached, Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord. ^{Act 3.19} In the account of his preaching which Paul gave Agrippa, he said that he showed first to those in Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works fit for repentance. ^{Act 26.20} And he called upon the elders at Ephesus to bear witness that he had taught publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. ^{Act 20.21}

Repentance, then, is the great, immediate, and pressing duty of all who hear the gospel. They are called upon to forsake their sins and to return to God through Jesus Christ. *The neglect of this duty is the rejection of salvation.* For, as we have seen, unless we repent, we must perish. It is because repentance is thus indispensably necessary, that God reveals so clearly not only the evil of sin, and the terrors of his law, but his infinite compassion and love; that He calls upon us to turn to Him and live, assuring us that he is the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. This call to repentance commonly follows men

from cradle to grave. It is one of the first sounds which wakes the infant's ear; it is one of the last which falls on the failing senses of the dying sinner. Everything in this world is vocal with the voice of mercy. All joy and all sorrow are calls to return to God with whom are the issues of life. Every opening grave, every church, every page of the Bible, is an admonition or an invitation.

Every serious thought or anxious foreboding is the voice of God, saying, Turn, for why will you die? ^{Eze 33.11} It is through all these admonitions, that men force their way to death. They perish, because they deliberately reject salvation.

It is one of the mysteries of redemption, that under the economy of mercy, *all duties are graces*. Though repentance is our duty, it is no less the gift of God. Those who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, gladly seize on such truths, either as an excuse for delay under the pretense of awaiting God's time, or as a palliation of the guilt of a hard and impenitent heart. But those who feel the greatness of the work required of them, rejoice in the truth, and rouse themselves with new energy to their duty, which is no longer a hopeless task. And with all earnestness, they work out their own salvation, because it is God who works in them to will and to do, according to his own pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII. PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

Section I. The nature and necessity of a public profession of religion.

Religion consists in a great measure in the secret intercourse of the soul with God; in those acts of adoration, gratitude, confidence and submission which the eye of man cannot see, and with which the stranger cannot intermeddle. These secret exercises, by controlling the external conduct and supplying the motives for the humble demeanor and benevolent actions of the Christian, cannot fail to manifest their existence. But any unnecessary parading of them for the notice of others, borders on the offense which our Savior condemned in the ancient Pharisees. Agreeably to his directions, our alms are to be given in secret; when we pray we should pray in secret; and when we fast, we should not appear to men to fast, but to our Father who sees in secret. In these words, Christ more than condemns hypocrisy; he not only forbids the performance of religious duties with the design of being seen by men, but he teaches that true religion is unobtrusive, and retiring. It avoids the glare of day. It is holy, solemn, secret — rejoicing in being unobserved. It is directly opposed to the ostentatious display of religious feelings in which those delight, who seem to make religion consist in talking about it.

Although religion is thus retiring in its character, and although it consists in great measure in the secret intercourse of the soul with

God, it nevertheless has its social and public relations, which render it impossible that a true Christian should desire to keep the fact of his being a Christian, a secret from the world. This is indeed often attempted for a time, by those whose faith is weak, and who dread the reproach with which a profession of religion is attended, in many circumstances. The temptation to such concealment cannot well be appreciated by those who have always lived in the bosom of a religious society, where the profession of religious sentiments is a passport to confidence and respect. Such persons little know the trial to which those of their brethren are exposed, whose parents or associates view all experiential religion with hatred or contempt, and who visit every manifestation of pious feeling with the chastisement of cruel mockings. To a greater or less degree, a large portion of the people of God, are called upon to endure this trial; and they are often tempted to ask whether they cannot be religious without letting it be known? If religion is a secret thing, why may it not be *kept* a secret?

The answer to this question is simple and decisive. The confession of Christ before men is declared in Scripture to be essential to salvation. Our Savior said, Whoever confesses me before men, I will confess him before my father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.

^{Mar 10.32} Again, Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father and with the holy angels. ^{Mar 8.38} Also Paul says, in writing to Timothy, Do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be a partaker

of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. ^{2Tim 1.8}
If we suffer, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us. ^{2Tim 2.12} And still more explicitly, when teaching the condition of salvation, he says, If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with your mouth confession is made unto salvation. ^{Rom 10.9-10}

The same truth is taught in all those passages which assert the necessity of baptism, because baptism involves a public profession of the gospel. Thus our Savior said in his commission to the apostles, Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. ^{Mar 16.16} And on the day of Pentecost, when the people were convinced of the sin of having rejected Christ, and asked what they should do, Peter answered, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus. ^{Act 2.38} It was not enough that they should retire to their houses and repent before God; they must publicly acknowledge Christ and their allegiance to him. Therefore, there is no condition of discipleship more clearly laid down than this. If we do not confess Christ, he will not confess us. If we do not acknowledge him as our Savior, he will not acknowledge us as his disciples. If we are not willing to share with him in the reproach and contradiction of sinners, we cannot share in the glory which he has received from the Father.

The relation in which we stand to Christ as our king renders a public acknowledgment of his authority necessary. In the kingdoms of this world, no one is admitted to the privileges of citizenship without a profession of allegiance. And in the kingdom of Christ, those who do not acknowledge his authority, reject him. By refusing to confess him as Lord, they declare that they are not his people.

The church is also often compared in Scripture to a family. Can a child live in his father's house without acknowledging his parent? May he receive the blessings of a mother's love, and not acknowledge her to be his mother? May he pass her in the street without recognition, and then steal, under cover of night, to be fed at her table and to be protected by her care? As everyone feels that no child with proper filial feelings, could hesitate to acknowledge his parents, so we may be assured that we are not the children of God, if we are afraid or ashamed to acknowledge Him as our Father, and our obligations to honor and obey him.

It is still further to be considered that Christians are the worshippers of Christ. The apostle salutes the Corinthians as those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus; and from the beginning, in Jerusalem and at Damascus, Christians were designated as those who called on the name of Christ. ^{Act 9.14, 21} But what kind of a worshipper is he who is ashamed or afraid to acknowledge his God? All the relations, therefore, in which a Christian stands to Christ as his king, as the head of the family of God, and as the object of divine worship, involve the necessity of confessing him before men. And we

practically reject him in all these relations by neglecting or refusing this public profession of him and his religion.

A moment's consideration of the nature of the religion of Jesus Christ must convince us of the impossibility of being a secret Christian. Not only the heart, but the whole external deportment must be regulated by that religion. It forbids many things which the world allows; it enjoins many things which the world forbids. Obedience to its precepts of necessity includes a public profession, because such obedience draws a line of distinction between its disciples, and the people of the world. This is one of the reasons why the people of God are called *saints*. They are distinguished, separated from others, and consecrated to God. When they cease to be thus distinguished from those around them, they cease to be saints. If their inward temper and outward conduct do not mark them as a peculiar people, they are not Christians. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. It cannot be that those who deny themselves, and take up their cross daily, and follow Christ; whose affections are set on things above; who walk by faith and not by sight; who live to God and keep themselves unspotted from the world, should not visibly differ from those whose spirit, principles, and objects are all worldly. Nor is it possible that this difference should exist, without an avowal on the part of the Christian, of its cause. He must appeal to the authority of Christ as the justification of his conduct. And therefore, he cannot live as a Christian without confessing Christ.

Besides the general temper and deportment required by the gospel, there are many specific duties enjoined by Christ, which imply a public profession of his religion. The organization of his church as a visible society, supposes the separation of a people recognizing his authority, and professing to act in obedience to His laws. The commission which he gave to his disciples was that they should go into all the world, preaching his gospel, making disciples, baptizing them in his name, gathering them into distinct societies, and appointing officers over them for conducting public worship, and for the exercise of discipline. All this supposes that his followers should constitute a body publicly acknowledging him as their head, and confessing him as their Lord and Savior before the world. How can a man keep the fact of his being a Christian a secret, when Christianity is made by its author, to assume this visible, organized form? It is specially enjoined upon every believer to associate himself with the church, to assemble with his fellow Christians for public worship, and to unite with them in celebrating the Savior's death. If a Christian is one who obeys Christ, and if obedience includes those external acts which involve this public acknowledgment of him, then no man can be a Christian who does not make this acknowledgment.

There are few duties commanded in the word of God (and those are founded on positive precepts), which right feelings do not, of themselves, urge us to discharge. If we are required to forsake sin, to serve God, to love the brethren, to live for others rather than ourselves, to be instant in prayer, to join in the public and social worship of God — these are things in which the renewed heart

instinctively delights. The external command guides and sanctions the performance; but the motive to obedience is not mere regard to authority. In like manner, while the public confession of Christ is enjoined in Scripture as a necessary duty, it is at the same time, the spontaneous tribute of every Christian heart. If no subject requires being urged to acknowledge a sovereign whom he loves; if no child needs to be commanded to confess a parent whom he reveres; then much less does the believer need to be forced to confess the Savior whom he regards as the brightness of the Father's glory; the one to whom he feels indebted for redemption, and whom he hopes to worship and serve with saints and angels in heaven. It is not meant to be asserted that no believer is ever ashamed of Jesus; nor that under circumstances of peculiar trial, he may not fear to acknowledge His truth, or to assume His name. Peter once denied his master. But it is certainly true that no man can have right views of Christ, and right feelings towards him, without habitually, openly, and gladly acknowledging him as his God and Savior. He will esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

It is not difficult to understand the nature of the duty now under consideration. To confess Christ is to recognize his character and claims. It is to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. It is to admit the truth of the doctrines which he taught. It is to profess our allegiance to him as our Lord and Savior. This confession must be public; it must be made before men; it must be made with the mouth, and not

left to be inferred from the conduct. It should be remembered that this includes more than the mere assumption of the name *Christian*, as distinct from Pagan or Mohammedan. If men misconceive or misrepresent the character of Christ, a profession of such erroneous views is not the confession which he requires. To acknowledge Christ merely as a good man, or an inspired teacher, is in fact to deny him in his true character as the Son of God, as the propitiation for sin, as the only mediator and the sovereign Lord of the living and the dead. And to acknowledge the gospel merely as a code of morals, is to reject it as the revelation of the grace of God. The confession which is required is the public acknowledgment of Christ in his true character, and of his gospel in its real nature. It will not do to strip the gospel of everything offensive to human pride, and to acknowledge the rest. The very thing to be done is to take the shame of professing what is a scandal to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. It is to acknowledge our faith and confidence in a Savior despised and rejected by men, and in doctrines which human reason can neither discover nor comprehend.

There are several ways in which this public confession is to be made. As already remarked, there is a confession included in the obedience rendered to the commands of Christ. Obedience is therefore one form of confession; and it can never be rendered without distinguishing those who yield to it, as the followers of Christ. Again, occasions frequently occur in which Christians are called upon to avow the truth, to defend it against opponents, to urge it upon those over whom they have influence or authority, or to give a reason for

the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. ^{1Pet 3.15} But the chief and most important mode of confession, is attendance upon the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's supper. So much prominence is given to these institutions, in the word of God, that every Christian should have clear ideas of their nature and of his own duty in regard to them.

Section II. Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The nature, design and efficacy of these ordinances.

It is clearly taught in the Bible, that Baptism and the Lord's supper, whatever other important ends they may be intended to serve, were appointed as a mode of publicly professing our faith in the gospel. The public participation in the rites of any religion is, in its nature, a profession of that religion. It is on this ground that the apostle charges with idolatry the Corinthians who, within the precincts of the heathen temples, partook of the sacrifices offered to idols.

I speak as to wise men; judge what I say. Participation in a Christian ordinance, isn't it an act of Christian worship? Participation in a Jewish sacrifice, isn't it an act of Jewish worship? And by parity of reasoning, isn't participation in a heathen ordinance, an act of heathen worship? This is the purport of the apostle's argument in 1Cor 10.15-21, and it is obviously founded on the admitted truth, that joining in the celebration of the ordinances of the gospel is, from the *nature* of the act, a profession of the religion of Christ. The recipient thereby places himself in communion with the object of worship and with all his fellow worshippers. For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of one bread. Hence the apostle

adds, you cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils. It is impossible to be in communion with Christ and Satan at the same time. And therefore, it is the grossest inconsistency to partake at the same time of the ordinances of Christ, and of the sacrifices of devils. All this supposes that participation in Christian ordinances is a profession of the Christian religion. When Christ commanded the apostles to make disciples, baptizing them, etc., he obviously intended that baptism should be a badge of discipleship, or that his followers should acknowledge their relation to him by that rite. This is indeed the prominent idea in the formula, *To baptize in the name of anyone*. And hence Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were not *his* disciples or followers, by asking them, Were you baptized in the name of Paul? It is, however, unnecessary to dwell on this point, as it is universally conceded that participation in the ordinances of the gospel, is the appointed mode of confessing Christ before the world.

As it is the duty of every Christian to confess Christ, and to confess him in this particular way, it is necessary to inquire more particularly into the nature and design of these ordinances. It has long been customary in the church to call these institutions *sacraments*. Little light, however, can be derived from the use of this term, because it is not a scriptural word, and because it is employed by ancient writers in a very comprehensive sense. As it comes from the word meaning *to consecrate*, anything sacred was called a sacrament. The Romans applied the term to a sum of money deposited in the hands of the

High Priest to stay the decision of a suit. They also called the oath by which soldiers consecrate themselves to the military service a sacrament; and in the Latin church (from where we borrowed the word), it was used as synonymous with *mystery*, not only as applied to things which had a hidden meaning, but in its wider sense of signifying what was undiscoverable by human reason. In this sense the Gospel itself, the calling of the Gentiles, the future conversion of the Jews are sacraments. It is not from a word of such latitude of meaning that the nature of the Christian ordinances can be learned; but on the contrary, the Christian sense of the word must be determined from what the Scriptures teach concerning the ordinances to which the word is now applied.

They are, in the first place, *rites of divine appointment*, and not of human institution. When Christ was about to ascend into heaven, he said, Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. ^{Mat 28.19-20} The rite of baptism was therefore instituted by Christ, and is to be continued as long as there are disciples to be made, even to the end of the world. And on the night in which he was betrayed, he instituted the Lord's supper, saying, Do this in remembrance of me, with the command that it should be observed until He comes. The New Testament furnishes abundant evidence that the apostles enjoined the observance of these ordinances, both by precept and example, agreeably to the Savior's directions. Therefore, no rite is a sacrament in the Christian sense of

the term, which is not a matter of divine appointment, and of perpetual obligation.

In the second place, the Bible teaches us that the sacraments are the signs of *spiritual blessings*. They are designed by outward, significant actions, to represent inward, spiritual gifts. The great blessing offered in the Gospel is union with Christ, and the consequent participation of his merits and spirit, by which we are freed from the condemnation and pollution of sin. And this is the blessing which baptism and the Lord's supper are designed to represent. Hence it is said, As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ — which implies *union* with him. ^{Gal 3.27} Believers are said to be baptized into one body. ^{1Cor 12.13} That is, by baptism they are constituted one body; but they are one body only by virtue of their union with their common Head. Don't you know, asks the apostle, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? *i.e.* so as to be united with him in his death. ^{Rom 6.3} As union with Christ is the great blessing signified by baptism, and as pardon and sanctification are the consequences of that union, this ordinance is also represented as symbolizing these two great blessings of the covenant of grace. Thus on the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the people, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. ^{Act 2.38} And Ananias said to Paul, Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. ^{Act 22.16} In many similar passages, the reference of baptism to pardon is very clearly expressed.

No less clear is its intended significancy of *sanctification*. This is plainly taught in the passages from the epistles to the Galatians and Romans (quoted above), in which baptism is declared to represent our union with Christ, and our death to sin, and our living to God. And in the epistle to Titus, it is called “the washing of regeneration;” ^{Tit 3-5} and in the epistle to the Ephesians, Christ is said to sanctify his church “with the washing of water by the word.” ^{Eph 5:26} It need hardly be remarked that the ordinance is appropriately significant of these great truths. Water is the common means of purification. Both the guilt and pollution of sin are represented in Scripture as a defilement; and hence they are said to be *washed away* by the blood and Spirit of Christ. It is this two-fold purification that is so appropriately represented by the ordinance in question.

The same truths, under a different aspect, are exhibited in the Lord’s supper. The bread represents the body of Christ, and the wine his blood, as expressly declared by our Savior when he said, “This is my body, this is my blood.” And by our partaking of the bread and wine, our partaking of that which they symbolize, is clearly represented. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. ^{1Cor 10:16-17} Here, as in the passage quoted above in reference to baptism, believers are declared to be one body, because by partaking of the Lord’s supper their communion with the Lord Jesus is expressed. These ordinances, therefore, though in different ways, set forth the same

great truth. They are both divinely appointed symbols of our union with Christ, and partaking of the benefits which flow from his mediation and death.

We would greatly err, however, if we supposed they were merely *signs*. We are taught that they are *seals*; that they were appointed by Christ to certify to believers their interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace. Among men a seal is used for the purpose of authentication and confirmation. It is intended to assure the party concerned, that the document to which it is attached, is genuine and binding. In condescension to our weakness, God has been pleased not only to promise pardon and purity to believers, but to appoint these ordinances as seals of his promises. The simple assurance given to Noah, that the earth would not a second time be destroyed by a deluge, might have been a sufficient foundation for confidence; but God saw fit to appoint the rainbow to be a perpetual confirmation of his covenant; and throughout all generations when that bow appears, men feel that it is not merely a sign of the returning sun, but a divinely appointed pledge of the promise of God. In like manner, God willing more abundantly to show to his people the immutability of his promise, has confirmed it by these seals, which are designed to assure the believer that as certainly as he receives the *signs* of the blessings of the covenant, he will receive the blessings *themselves*.

It is plain that these ordinances were really intended to confirm the promises of God, from the fact that Paul says that circumcision was

the seal of the righteousness of faith. That is, it was designed to assure Abraham and his descendants that God would regard and treat as righteous, all who believed his words. And that something similar is intimated by the ordinance of baptism, may be inferred from the manner in which the apostle speaks of the spiritual import of *circumcision*, and then of *baptism*, in Col 2.10, 12. And in reference to the Lord's supper, the Savior said, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; that is, the new covenant was *ratified* by his blood. The cup is the appointed memorial of that blood; and it is therefore, at the same time, the memorial and confirmation of the covenant itself; it is the assurance to us that God has promised the blessings of that covenant to all believers. Baptism and the Lord's supper are therefore visible pledges or confirmations of the fact that Christ has died, that his death has been accepted as a propitiation for sin, and that for his sake God will grant pardon, sanctification, and eternal life to all those who believe.

If however, the sacraments are seals on the part of God, then receiving them implies a voluntary engagement on the part of the Christian to devote himself to the service of Christ. The gospel is represented under the form of a covenant. It is so called by Christ himself. But a covenant implies *mutual* stipulations. God promises to his people pardon and salvation; and in His strength, they promise faith and obedience. The sacraments are the seals of this covenant. And God, in their appointment, binds himself to the performance of his promise; and by receiving them, his people bind themselves to trust and serve him. This idea is included in the representation that

is given in Rom 6.3-4, where believers are said to have been buried with Christ in baptism, that as he rose from the dead, they also should walk in newness of life. It is also included in the very formula of baptism; for to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, implies a voluntary dedication of ourselves to God as our Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The same thing is taught in all the passages in which participation in Christian ordinances is said to include a profession of the gospel; for the gospel imposes *duties* as well as promises *blessings*.

It is probably in this view of these ordinances that the name *sacraments* was so generally applied to them. For as the oath by which the soldier consecrated himself to the military service was called a sacrament, so the ordinances in which the believer binds himself to the service of Christ was appropriately designated by the same term. The phrase *sacramental host* is therefore not inaptly applied to the people of God, considered as a great multitude who solemnly bound themselves by sacraments to live to His glory.

Baptism and the Lord's supper are ordinances of divine appointment and perpetual obligation. They are designed to distinguish the followers of Christ from the world; to exhibit the truths of the gospel; to seal to believers the divine promises and to bring them into covenant with God. As such, the interesting question arises, *What good do they do?* What benefits are we authorized to expect from them? The answer commonly given to this question by the great body of evangelical Christians, is that the sacraments are *efficacious*

means of grace. They don't merely exhibit, but actually confer upon those who worthily receive them, the benefits which they represent. As they are divinely appointed to set forth Christ and his benefits, and to assure the believer of his interest in them, they have even as *moral means*, a powerful influence to confirm his faith, to excite his gratitude and love, and to open the fountains both of penitence and joy. But as the word of God has not only its own moral influence as truth in the sanctification of the soul, but also when attended by the demonstration of the Spirit, a divine and effectual power. So that the sacraments have not only an influence due to the lively exhibition of truth, but as means of God's appointment, and attended by his Spirit, they become efficacious signs of grace, *communicating* what they *signify*. Nothing less than this can satisfy the strong language of the Scriptures on this subject, or the experience of God's people. When the Christian, in the exercise of his faith, sees in the water of baptism, the lively emblem of the purifying influence of the blood and Spirit of Christ; and he sees in the bread and wine, the memorials of the Savior's death; and he knows that they are appointed to be a pledge of the salvation of all believers — then he receives Christ in receiving the appointed symbols of His grace. He receives anew the forgiveness of his sins; he enters into fellowship with God; and his soul is filled with the Holy Ghost. Hence it is that believers so often find their strength renewed, their faith confirmed, their purposes invigorated, and their hearts filled with joy and love, while attending on these ordinances.

As the efficacy of the sacraments is a subject of great practical importance, it is necessary to examine more particularly what the Scriptures teach on this subject. Baptism is called *the washing of regeneration*; it is said to unite us to Christ, Gal 3.27 to make us partakers of his death and life, Rom 6.4-5 to wash away our sins, Act 22.16 and to save the soul. 1Pet 3.21 The bread and wine in the Lord's supper, are said to be the body and blood of Christ; to partake of these emblems is said to secure union with Christ, and a participation in the merits of his death. 1Cor 10.16-17

These and similar passages must be understood either with or without limitation. If they are to be limited, the limitation must not be arbitrarily imposed, but supplied by the Scriptures themselves. We have no right to say that the sacraments confer these benefits in every case in which no moral impediment is interposed, because no such limitation is expressed in the passages themselves, nor is it elsewhere taught in the Scriptures. The limitation which the Scriptures impose on these passages is *the necessity of faith*. They teach that the sacraments are thus efficacious, not to every recipient, but to the *believer*; those who already have the grace which these ordinances represent. If it is asked, How can they be said to confer the grace which is already possessed? Let it be remembered that the one who has been sprinkled with the blood of Christ, needs the application repeated often; who has received the Holy Spirit needs to receive Him again; who has received Christ needs to receive him day by day that he may live upon him.¹³ It is clear that the Scriptures teach that the passages in question are to be understood with the

qualification just stated, because otherwise they would teach that everyone who is baptized is a child of God, renewed by the Holy Spirit, united to Christ, and made a partaker of the saving benefits of his death.

But this cannot be true, *first*, because the Bible abundantly teaches that those who are renewed and receive the Holy Spirit, have the fruits of the spirit, love, gentleness, goodness, and faith. Where these are not, the Spirit is not. But these fruits do not uniformly, or even *generally* attend receiving the outward ordinance. We know that although Simon Magus was baptized, he remained in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. ^{Act 8.23} We know from Paul's epistles, that many of the baptized Galatians and Corinthians were the enemies of the cross of Christ. We know from our own daily observation, that multitudes of those who are baptized and received to the Lord's supper, do not differ in temper or life from the world around them. God, therefore, in the actual administration of His kingdom, contradicts that interpretation of his word which makes it teach that the sacraments *always* confer the benefits which they represent. It degrades the renewing of the heart and the gift of the Holy Ghost, into things of no account, to represent them as the portion of the unholy multitudes who, in every age and church, have been admitted to baptism and the Lord's supper.

In the *second* place this interpretation is opposed to what the Scriptures elsewhere teach about the nature of sacraments. The opinion that such ordinances uniformly convey grace and introduce

the recipient into favor with God, was one of those false doctrines of the Jews, which Paul so earnestly combatted: 'Great is the virtue of circumcision, for no circumcised person enters hell.' This was the confident and destructive persuasion of the formalists of that age. In opposition to this doctrine, the apostle assured them that circumcision would indeed profit them, if they kept the law. But if they broke the law, their circumcision became uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter. Rom 2.25-29 We have here a very explicit statement of the nature and efficacy of a sacrament. It has no efficacy considered in itself; its value depends on the presence or performance of the condition of the covenant to which it is attached. If the Jews kept the law, their circumcision secured to them all the blessings of the covenant under which they lived. But if they broke the law, their circumcision was of no avail. It was therefore not external circumcision that made a man a Jew; but the circumcision of the heart, of which the external rite was the sign.

In like manner, it is not external baptism that makes a man a Christian, but the baptism of the Spirit, of which washing with water is the appointed symbol. The two are not *necessarily* connected; and where the latter is lacking, the former can be of no avail. And lest it be supposed that we have no right to apply what is said about the sacraments of the old dispensation, to those of the new, the very same doctrine is taught in reference to the New Testament

sacraments. The apostle Peter says, We are saved by water; not ordinary water, but by baptism; not mere external baptism, however, but by the sincere turning of the heart to God; that is, by the inward change of which baptism is the outward sign. ^{1Pet 3.21} This passage, in its doctrinal import, is precisely parallel to that referring to circumcision as just quoted. Neither rite, therefore, necessarily conveyed the grace of which they were the signs; and no value is ascribed to either, apart from the spiritual change which they are appointed to represent.

In like manner, in reference to the Lord's supper, the apostle teaches that the mere external act is so far from being necessarily connected with receiving the benefits of Christ's death, that those who ate and drank unworthily, ate and drank judgment to themselves. Nothing, indeed, can be more opposed to the whole spirit of the religion of the Bible, than the doctrine that external rites are necessarily connected with spiritual blessings; that the favor of God is to be obtained by mere unresisting submission to religious ceremonies. A man may be baptized; or circumcised on the eighth day; he may belong to the purest and most apostolic church; he may be blameless as to all the external prescriptions of the Gospel — and he may still be destitute of the grace of God and unprepared for His presence. It is not by works of righteousness, much less by ceremonial observances, that we are to be saved, but by the righteousness of Christ and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. ^{Tit 3.5} He is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is baptism that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian

who is one inwardly, and the baptism which is unto salvation, is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.

In the *third* place, the sacraments are not designed to convey grace to those who don't have it. This is plain, because the Scriptures require those who are admitted to these ordinances, to make a profession of their faith and repentance. When the apostles began to preach, we are told that, Those who gladly received the word were baptized. ^{Act 2.41} When the eunuch desired to be baptized, Philip said to him, If you believe with all your heart, you may. ^{Act 8.37} Cornelius did not receive the Holy Spirit in the first instance by baptism, but when Peter had evidence that he had already received the Spirit, he asked, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? ^{Act 10.47} Paul was a penitent believer before his baptism. And thus, in all other cases when men were baptized, they professed to be Christians. They were not *made* Christians by their admission to the sacraments; but their Christian character or standing was thereby *acknowledged*. It has accordingly been the custom in all ages, to require a profession of faith on the part of those who are received to the sealing ordinances. But faith is an exercise of a renewed heart; and if faith supposes regeneration, and baptism supposes faith, then by the voice of the church as well as Scripture, baptism also supposes the renovation of the heart.

Finally, God bears his testimony against the doctrine which teaches an inseparable connection between these ordinances and spiritual

blessings, by granting these blessings to those who have not received any sacramental rite. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised; Cornelius was a just man, and accepted by God, and a recipient of the Holy Ghost, before he was baptized; the penitent thief was assured of his admission into paradise, though he was never born of water. If the Scriptures then require the evidence of regeneration in those who would acceptably attend upon the sacraments; if they teach that many who receive the outward sign do not receive the inward grace; and on the other hand, that many receive the inward grace, who have not received the outward sign, then they also teach that these ordinances are not appointed to convey (in the first instance) pardon and sanctification, but to be signs and seals of these blessings to the penitent believer; and to him, and him only are they efficacious means of grace.

It is therefore obvious that those passages in Scripture which refer our salvation to baptism and the Lord's supper, cannot be understood strictly according to the letter, and still be consistent with the plain teaching of the Bible. At the same time, it must not be supposed that they are to be perverted, or taken in any sense other than their natural one; that is, in any sense other than that which the universally received rules of interpretation justify and require. It is agreeable to the common language of men, and the usage of Scripture, that when any declaration or service is the appointed means of professing our faith and obedience, making a declaration or performing such a service is said to secure the blessings which are promised to the *faith* that is thereby professed. It is said that

whoever confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is born of God; and again, with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. This is said because confession implies *faith*; and no one supposes that an insincere, careless, heartless confession will secure the salvation of any man. Thus too we are said to be saved by calling on the Lord, because invocation implies *trust*. In like manner we are said to be saved by baptism, because baptism implies *faith*. If this faith is lacking, baptism can do us no more good than a heartless confession. There is no more difficulty in understanding why the Scriptures should connect salvation with the use of the sacraments, than in understanding why they should connect the same blessing with invocation or confession. There is no difficulty in either case, if we allow the Scriptures to explain themselves, and interpret them as we explain all other writings.

Again, it is according to scriptural usage to ascribe to a sign the name and attributes of the thing signified. Thus circumcision is called the Covenant of God, because it was the sign of that covenant. Christ called the cup the New Covenant; the wine he called his blood, and the bread his body. Those who partake of the wine are therefore said to receive his blood, and of course the benefits which it purchased.

It is also to be remembered that the sacraments are *seals*; and it is common to attribute to any ceremony by which an engagement is ratified, the efficacy which belongs not to the *ceremony*, but to the *engagement* itself. The inauguration ceremony is said to induct a man into the office, the right to which it merely declares and

confirms publicly. Even in the strict language of the law, a deed, with its signature and seal, is said to convey a right of property, although it is simply the evidence of the purpose of the original possessor. It is that *purpose* which conveys the right; and if it can be shown that the man who holds the deed was not the man intended by the grantor, the deed would be regarded as worthless. If a man deeds an estate to A, on the assumption that he is the son of B, if it were proved that A was not the son of B, the deed would not convey a valid title to him. But the blessings of the Gospel are declared to be intended for *penitent believers*; the sacraments are the external means of recognizing the conveyance of these blessings; to those who are really what they profess to be, they do in fact convey and secure these blessings; to others they confer no such benefits. When an unbeliever receives these ordinances, he no more obtains a title to the blessings which they represent, than a man obtains a title to an estate by falsely assuming the name of the person for whom it is intended.

There is nothing, therefore, in the language of the Scriptures on this subject, which is not perfectly consistent with the common Protestant doctrine that the sacraments have no inherent efficacy of their own, but become efficacious means of grace *to those who believe*; the Holy Spirit thereby communicates to *believers* the blessings which those ordinances significantly represent.

Section III. Obligation to attend upon the Sacraments.

Qualifications for the proper discharge of the duty.

The obligation which rests upon all Christians to attend upon the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's supper, arises clearly from what has been shown to be their nature and design. We have seen that they are institutions appointed by Christ himself. He has commanded all his followers to be baptized and to commemorate his death in a prescribed manner. As obedience to Christ is necessary, so is participating in these ordinances. However, as it is a necessity arising out of a positive command, it is a *qualified* necessity, since such commands are not binding in all circumstances. It is impossible that a sinner should be saved without faith and repentance; but it is not impossible that he should be saved without the sacraments. As we are bound to keep the sabbath as part of our obedience to God, and yet we may innocently labor on that day when necessity or mercy requires it. So although we are bound to present ourselves at the table of the Lord as an act of obedience, we may be innocently absent whenever that absence is not the effect of a willful or disobedient spirit. However, as the command of Christ on this subject is express, the obligation which it imposes is of the strongest character.

In the *second* place, it has been shown that to confess Christ before men is an indispensable duty, and that the sacraments are the appointed means for making this confession. It therefore follows that attendance on the sacraments is also an indispensable duty. When in human governments the laws prescribe a particular mode in which we are to acknowledge allegiance to our country, it is not competent for us to neglect that mode; nor do we have a right to adopt a different method of acknowledgment, or to allow our allegiance to be inferred from our conduct. If we wish to be recognized as citizens, we must in the prescribed form, acknowledge ourselves to be such. And if Christ has prescribed a particular way in which he will be acknowledged by his followers, then to intelligently and willfully refuse to obey his command, is to renounce our allegiance to him, and to forfeit the benefits of his kingdom.

Again, as the sacraments are the seals of the covenant of grace, to reject these seals is to reject the covenant itself. It is not meant that they are indispensable in such a sense that if a man performs the *conditions* of the covenant, he will be excluded from its benefits for lack of the *seals*. Among men, indeed, we often see that the lack of the prescribed number of witnesses to a signature, the lack of a seal, or even a clerical error in a document, is sufficient to set aside a solemn engagement. Nothing of this kind can occur under the government of God, where justice is never embarrassed by technical formalities. The apostle expressly teaches that if the law is broken, circumcision becomes uncircumcision; so on the other hand, if a man keeps the law, his uncircumcision will be counted for

circumcision. It is admitted, therefore, that if a man has the faith, repentance, and obedience required by the gospel, his salvation is secure. But no man has a right to assume that he has this faith and repentance, if he neglects to obey the commands of Christ. The essential conditions of salvation have been the same under every dispensation. If any man under the old economy, had the faith of Abraham, then he was entitled to the blessings promised to Abraham. Nevertheless, as circumcision was the appointed means of expressing that faith, and of accepting the covenant of which it was the condition, it was expressly declared that the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. ^{Gen 17.14} Is it not equally true that those who intelligibly and willfully neglect baptism and the Lord's supper, break the covenant under which the church is now placed? It will not do for us to say, if we have the *substance*, the *form* is of little account. We all know that if an ancient Israelite had repentance toward God, and faith in the promised Messiah, his sins were forgiven; and yet unless he expressed his faith by bringing the appointed sacrifice to the altar, he was *not* forgiven. God saw fit that the mode of pardon should be thus exhibited and recognized. In like manner, He now requires that the method of salvation should be publicly acknowledged and set forth in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Therefore, we reject the covenant of God by neglecting these ordinances, as really as the Israelites did who rejected circumcision or the offering of sacrifices.

Another illustration of this subject may be borrowed from the marriage contract. The essence of the covenant is the mutual consent of parties. But in all civilized countries, some public manifestation of that consent is essential to the validity of the engagement. Thus too, the essence of our covenant with God is repentance and faith; but baptism and the Lord's supper being the divinely appointed means of signifying and ratifying the engagement, they can no more be neglected than the public recognition of the marriage covenant.

It was a fatal perversion when the Jews imagined that circumcision and sacrifices without faith and obedience, were effectual to salvation; and it is no less a fatal delusion to imagine that baptism and the Lord's supper, without those inward graces, can secure the favor of God. But in avoiding one extreme, we must not run into the opposite. Though the ancient sacrifices were an abomination to the Lord without faith, the sacrifices were still necessary by divine appointment; and although Christian ordinances are empty forms without the grace which they represent, by divine appointment, they too are obligatory and, in their place, essential.

No Christian, however, needs to be forced by the stress of authority to yield obedience to the commands of Christ. It is enough for him that it is the will of his Savior that the truths and blessings of the Gospel should be exhibited and commemorated by the perpetual observance of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. Even if he were unable to see any fitness in such observance, or even if experience taught him nothing about its value, yet he would

cheerfully obey. Much more may he be expected to yield a ready obedience, when he knows both from Scripture and experience, that these ordinances are made the channels of divine blessings to the believer; that they are means of grace and sources of the purest spiritual enjoyments; that they bring him into communion with Christ and unite him in holy fellowship with all his brethren. He knows that to neglect these divine institutions is not only to violate a command of God and to break his covenant, but also to refuse to be fed at his table and to reject the provision which he has made for the life of our souls.

If the sacraments are such important means of grace, and if attendance upon them is a duty so plainly enjoined in the word of God, then it is important to inquire what the proper qualifications are for the acceptable discharge of this duty.

In considering this subject, we must not confound the qualifications which the church has a right to demand of those who present themselves as candidates for Christian communion, with those which such candidates are bound to seek in themselves. The church cannot judge the heart; she can only require a credible profession. It is her duty to explain the nature of the gospel, with its promises and commands, and to state clearly what the nature of the service is in which those engage, who profess to embrace the offers of salvation. She receives into communion those who, when thus instructed, declare that they accept the offers of divine mercy, and purpose to live in obedience to the divine commands — unless there is some

tangible evidence of the insincerity of their professions. This she does, not because she judges them to be true Christians, but because they possess the qualifications which alone she has a right to demand.

No priest under the old dispensation ever ventured to debar a man from the altar, because in his own mind, he might judge him to be destitute of the faith and penitence implied in the act of presenting a sacrifice. If the offeror had the external qualifications prescribed by the law, he was admitted. It was left to Him who searches the heart, to decide upon his spiritual state. Thus too, under the gospel dispensation, we find the apostles baptizing and admitting to the Lord's supper all who made the requisite profession, and against whom no visible evidence of insincerity could be produced. Whatever was considered a sufficient reason for excommunicating a church member, was of course regarded as sufficient to exclude an applicant for admission. It is of importance to remember that the church does not profess to believe all those to be true Christians, whom she admits to her communion. She cannot judge their inward sincerity; to their own master they must stand or fall. Many are no doubt confirmed in a false judgment of themselves, because they consider their admission to the church to be an expression of the judgment of their pastor, or brethren, that they are what they profess to be. It is natural for them to think well of themselves, when they consider experienced Christians as pronouncing a favorable judgment of their spiritual state. But they should remember that it is not the

prerogative of the church to judge the heart; she must receive all who have the external qualifications which the Scriptures require.

But though the church is obliged to confine her demands to a credible profession of faith and repentance, it is the duty of those who seek admission to her communion, to see that they have all the qualifications which the nature of the service demands. These qualifications may all be reduced to *knowledge* and *piety*.

If the Scriptures taught that the sacraments had an inherent efficacy of their own; that the water of baptism had power to wash away sin, and the bread and wine had a virtue to sustain spiritual life, then indeed they might be administered to the ignorant, the insensible, or the dying. But if we are taught that the efficacy of both the word and the ordinances does not depend on them, nor on those who administer them, but on the Holy Spirit, revealing and applying the truth thereby exhibited, then it is plain that they must be *understood* in order to be beneficial. It is one of the most important doctrines of the Bible, that God sanctifies his people through the truth. But truth is not truth to someone who does not understand it. If you repeat to an ignorant man a mathematical formula, although it may contain a proposition of the highest value, to him it is nothing. It communicates no idea to his mind, and it can produce no effect upon it. Or if you tell him that God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood, and he doesn't understand the meaning of the words, it's as though he never heard them. We therefore do not preach in an unknown tongue; nor do we

send Hebrew Bibles to the Hindus, or the Greek Scriptures to the Hottentots. Unless the truth is understood, it is not present to the mind, and cannot operate upon it.

In like manner, unless the sacraments are understood by those who receive them, they are an unmeaning ceremony for them. They either exhibit nothing, or they excite erroneous views and apprehensions. We degrade the Scriptures into formulas of incantation, and the sacraments into magical rites, if we suppose that a knowledge of their meaning is unnecessary. God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit — intelligently as well as sincerely and inwardly. It is therefore essential to a proper attendance on the sacraments, that we know what they are designed to represent, what benefits they confer, and what obligations they impose. When they are thus understood — when the believer sees in them the clear exhibition of the truths and promises of the gospel, and knows that they were appointed to be the means of his confessing Christ before men, and to ratify the gracious covenant of God with his soul — he then really receives the spiritual blessings of which the sacraments are the outward signs.

The knowledge requisite to a proper understanding of the sacraments includes a knowledge of all the essential doctrines of the Gospel. When a man is baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, unless these sacred names represent to his mind some definite idea — unless he knows them to be the names of the persons of the Godhead — he cannot know what he does in

submitting to be baptized. He does not acknowledge Jehovah; nor does he receive Him as his covenant God, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Baptism is designed to signify and seal our union with Christ, and our deliverance through him from the guilt and dominion of sin. So unless we know ourselves to be sinners, and know that it is necessary for us to be united to Christ, and by his blood and Spirit, to be pardoned and renewed, the ordinance loses all its significance for us. Thus a knowledge of the truth concerning God, sin, atonement, and regeneration is essential to a proper participation in this ordinance. And as the Lord's supper is intended to be a memorial of the death of Christ, unless we know who he was, why he died, and what benefits his death secures, we are incapable of profitably joining in this service.

All the affections must have an appropriate object. If we love, we love *something*; if we fear, we fear *something*; if we desire, we desire *something*. There can be neither faith, nor love, nor penitence, nor hope, nor gratitude, unless objects suited to these exercises are present to the mind; and the nature of these exercises depends upon the nature of the objects which call them forth. If they are excited by the truth, they are right and good; the purity and strength of the religious emotions will be in just proportion to the clearness with which the truth is spiritually discerned. *Knowledge is therefore essential to religion.*

We must not suppose, however, that knowledge and learning are synonymous terms, or that all knowledge is derived from without,

through the medium of the understanding. Very far from it. A large part of our knowledge is derived from our own consciousness or inward experience. The same external revelation may be presented to two equally intelligent men; if the one is made by the Spirit of God to feel in accordance with the truth, and the other is destitute of such feelings, the former will possess a knowledge of which the latter has no conception. He will have an insight into the nature of the things revealed, and into their truth and value, which is due entirely to what passes within his own bosom. These men, although they may be equal in *learning*, will differ greatly in *knowledge*. We accordingly find that the ignorant among God's people, often have far more knowledge of religious truth, than many learned men. They have more correct views of its nature; and the words by which it is expressed, excite in their minds far more definite conceptions of the real objects of the religious affections. However, as God does not reveal new truths, but sanctifies his people by his word, there must be *external* instruction in order for this inward spiritual knowledge. Hence ignorance of the truths revealed in the Scriptures, as it is inconsistent with the existence of right religious feeling — or in other words, with religion itself — so it is inconsistent with the proper participation in those ordinances by which those truths are set forth and confirmed.

The other qualifications for an acceptable participation in the sacraments are naturally suggested by the view given of their nature. As they are the appointed means for making a public profession of religion, it is of course requisite that we should be and believe what

we profess. The substance of this profession is that we are Christians; that we believe in Christ as the Redeemer of sinners; that we accept the terms of salvation proposed in the Gospel, and purpose to live in obedience to its commands. If we do not have this faith; if we do not thus purpose to renounce our sins and live unto God, then we make a false profession, and our service must be unacceptable to God.

Viewing the sacraments as seals of the covenant of grace, it is plain that they require the qualifications just mentioned in those who receive them. That covenant relates to deliverance from sin. In it, God engages to grant us salvation; and we engage to accept his mercy on the terms on which it is offered. If he promises to be our God, we promise to be his people. But how can those who love sin and are determined not to forsake it, enter into this solemn engagement with God? How can those who have no sense of their need of pardon, no desire for holiness, no sorrow for past transgressions, thus covenant with God for forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life?

With regard to the Lord's supper, we are taught that it was specially designed to be a memorial of Christ's death. If we join in celebrating his death, we profess to believe not only that he died, but that he was all that he claimed to be; that his death secures the benefits which the Scriptures attribute to it; and that we are bound to aid in keeping this great event in perpetual remembrance. The proper discharge of this duty requires that we should have a due sense of our obligations to Christ for having loved us and given himself for us. It requires that we should reverence and love him in some measure, in proportion to

his excellence and the value of the blessings which we receive from him. It requires that we should be prepared to own him, who was crucified and slain by wicked hands, as our Lord and Savior, and as such to obey and trust him.

In whatever light, therefore, the sacraments are viewed — whether as the means of publicly confessing Christ, or as signs and seals of spiritual blessings, or as commemorative of the work of redemption — no man can profitably or acceptably attend on them, without adequate knowledge of their nature, without faith in the truths which they represent and confirm, or without the penitence, gratitude, and love which those truths, when really believed, necessarily produce. Where this knowledge, faith, and love are found, there are the requisite qualifications for acceptable attendance on the sacraments; where they are lacking, such attendance must include false professions and insincere promises.

We must not, however, suppose that the lack of these qualifications frees us from the obligation to obey the command of Christ to be baptized and to commemorate his death. We are certainly bound to worship God though destitute of the reverence, faith, and love which such worship requires; and the plea of unfitness for the service cannot justify us in absenting ourselves from the ordinances which Christ has appointed. If we fear to assume the responsibility of a public profession of religion, we should remember that we make such profession every time we join in the public worship of the sanctuary. If we say we would offend God by approaching his table

without due preparation, let us remember that we offend him every time we pray, or hear the gospel, without faith, penitence, and obedience. It is in vain to attempt to introduce consistency into a half religious life. If men will renounce all claim to be of the number of God's people, and reject His service entirely, they may so far be consistent. But they cannot choose one part of his service and reject another; they cannot profess to be penitent and believing by joining in the worship of God, and yet declare themselves impenitent and unbelieving by absenting themselves from the sacraments. They do not place themselves on neutral ground by such inconsistency. Their only safe and proper course is to repent and believe. Then will they be acceptable worshippers and acceptable communicants. If they frequent the temple of God with a sincere desire to do his will, and seek his favor, let them, in the same state of mind, obey all his commands. If they come to the Lord's table to please Christ, to obey his will, to express their gratitude for his death, let them come. As their day is, so shall their strength be.

From the review of this whole subject, it is clear that the public confession of Christ is an indispensable condition of discipleship; that this confession must be made by attending on the ordinances which he has appointed; that these ordinances are not only the signs and seals of spiritual blessings, but they are made to the believer, by the Holy Spirit, effectual means of grace; that attendance upon them is therefore an indispensable duty, requiring no other qualifications than those which are necessary for the acceptable worship of God; and consequently that it is incumbent on all those who sincerely

desire to serve and honor Christ, and to partake of his salvation, to receive the sacraments, in obedience to his will.

CHAPTER IX. HOLY LIVING.

Section I. The nature of true religion.

It is natural that those who have experienced the agitations which frequently attend conversion, and have felt the peace which flows from a hope of acceptance with God, to imagine that the conflict is over; the victory won, and the work of religion accomplished. This imagination is soon dissipated. Birth is not the whole of life; neither is conversion the whole of religion. A young mother may, in the fulness of her joy, forget for a moment that her vocation as a mother has just begun; but when she looks upon her infant, so wonderful in its organization and instinct with an immortal spirit, the sight of its helplessness makes her feel how great a work she still has to do. An hour's neglect might prove the ruin of her hopes. Thus the young Christian, although at first disposed to think that his work is finished, soon finds that the feeble principle of spiritual life needs to be watched and nourished with ceaseless care. If abandoned at its birth, it must perish as certainly and as speedily as an exposed infant.

Another mistake on this subject is made by those who suppose that religion is a fitful sort of life; an alternation of excitement and insensibility. Those who labor under this delusion, are religious only on certain occasions. They live contentedly for months in unconcern; and then, if they can be moved to tenderness or joy, they're satisfied with the prospect of another period of collapse. No form of life is

thus intermittent. Neither plants nor animals live this way. Men don't, when healthy, pass from convulsions to fainting, and from fainting to convulsions; nor does religion, when it's genuine, ever assume this form. It indeed has its alternations, as there are periods of health and sickness, of vigor and lassitude in the animal frame; but so far as it deserves the name of *religion*, it is steady, active and progressive; and not a series of spasms.

It is a still more common error to suppose that religion is rather an external than an internal service. There are multitudes who consider themselves religious because they attend religious services; who suppose that regular attendance upon public worship and the outward forms of religion is enough to entitle them to the character of Christians.

The Scriptures teach us that religion is a new, spiritual life. Its commencement is therefore called a *new birth*, a *creation*, a *spiritual resurrection*. It's mysterious as to its principle or source. No man can tell what life is. He sees its different forms in vegetables, animals, and in the rational soul, but he cannot detect the secret *spring* of these different kinds of activity. The nature of spiritual life is no less inscrutable. The wind blows where it wishes; you hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell where it comes from, nor where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. A new kind of activity manifests itself in the soul that is born of God; but where that activity springs from, and how it is maintained, are among the secret things of God. We cannot doubt, however, that there is some permanent

cause of those new exercises. We know that the life of the body does not consist in the acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc.; nor does the soul consist of thought and volition; neither does spiritual life consist in the acts which manifest its existence. There is in regeneration a change effected in the state of the soul, which accounts for its perceptions, purposes, and feelings being different from what they were before, and for their continuing so. The cause of this difference is sometimes called a *new heart*, or *grace*, or *the spirit*, or the *new man*, or the renewal of the *inner man*. All these terms are used to designate the principle of spiritual life which manifests itself in the fruits of holiness. It is called *life* because it is thus permanent, or abiding. Those who for a time manifest a degree of ardor and activity in relation to religion, and then lose all interest in the subject, are like dead bodies on which electricity may for a while produce some of the appearances of animation, but which soon become insensible to all means of excitement. In such cases, there is no *principle* of life. Where religion is genuine, it has its root in a *new heart*, and it is therefore *permanent*.

Moreover, it's characteristic of the life of sentient and rational creatures, to be spontaneous in its exercises. There are certain acts to which it prompts, and in which it delights. It's not by constraint that animals eat, or drink, or sport in the consciousness of strength; nor is it by compulsion that men exercise their minds in the reception and communication of ideas, and the reciprocation of feeling. To be so isolated from their fellow-beings as to be prevented from giving vent to the force of intellectual and social life, is the severest of all

condemnations. In like manner reverence, gratitude, love, submission, are the spontaneous exercises of the renewed heart. They are the free, unbidden, unconstrained effusions of the soul. Religion which is reluctant, or forced, whether by fear or stress of conscience, is spurious. Filial obedience, if rendered from a dread of punishment, or from mere regard for appearances, is very different from that which flows from respect and love. And unless the service which we render to God flows unbidden from the heart, it's no evidence that we're His children. The Bible represents the people of God, as delighting in the things of God. His word, his ordinances, his sanctuary, his presence are their chief joy. When a man is ill, he takes little pleasure in the ordinary sources of enjoyment; and when the Christian is in a declining state, he knows little of the joy which belongs to religion. Still, whatever there is of spiritual life in any soul, will manifest itself in spontaneous exercises of piety.

Again, life in all the forms in which we're acquainted with it, is *progressive*; it's feeble at the beginning, and advances gradually to maturity. It's this way in plants, in animals, and in the rational soul; and it's also this way in spiritual life. There's a joy which attends the beginning of a religious life, which very often declines; this is a fact which may lead even the true Christian to think that religion itself is declining in his heart. Such joy, however, is a very uncertain criterion of the progress or decline of the spiritual life. The gambols of young animals show an exuberance of joy which those that have reached maturity no longer experience. But how imperfect is the organization of these playful creatures; how small is their power of endurance;

how little is their serviceable strength in comparison with that of those who don't know half their joys. It is not unnatural, therefore, that young Christians should feel a glow of happiness from the exercise of feelings — delightful from their novelty as well as from their nature — which those more advanced may have ceased to experience, in whom feeling has ripened into principle, and mere joyful emotions settled into a peace which surpasses all understanding. Though joy is not the proper criterion of progress in the divine life, it is as essential to its progressive nature, as it is to the life of the body to increase in stature as it advances from childhood to maturity; or to that of the mind to gather strength in its progress from infancy to manhood. A man with the mind of an infant is an idiot; he is destitute of what belongs to a rational being. And a Christian who makes no progress in holiness, must be essentially defective. The surest evidence of such progress is an increase of strength — strength of faith; strength of purpose; strength of principle; strength to do right, to resist evil, and to endure suffering. The people of God go from strength to strength, ^{Psa 84.7} perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. ^{2Cor 7.1}

True religion, then, is not an external service; nor is it a mere excitement of fear and sorrow, succeeded by peace and joy; nor is it a fitful alternation of such exercises. It's a permanent principle of action, spontaneous in its exercises, and progressive in its nature. These attributes are essential to its genuineness, but they don't constitute its whole character. It's a participation in the divine nature, ^{2Pet 1.4} or the conformity of the soul to God. It's described as

putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him; ^{Col 3.10} or being renewed in the spirit of our mind, that we may put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. ^{Eph 4.24} These two passages express the same truth. To be renewed in knowledge, or rather, *unto* knowledge, means to be renewed so as to know; and knowledge includes the perception, recognition, and approval of what is true and good. This comprehensive sense of the word is not unusual in the Scriptures; and hence it is said that to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life. ^{Joh 17.3} Such knowledge is the life of the soul; it is conformity to God in the perception and approval of truth. No higher conception of moral excellence can be formed than that which resolves it into the harmony of the soul with God, in judgment and will. This is what, in the parallel passage, the apostle calls righteousness and holiness of truth (that is, founded upon, or arising from truth). ^{Eph 4.24} The same idea of sanctification is presented in Rom 12.2, when it is said, Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (or, approve) what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. This is true religion: to approve what God approves, to hate what He hates, and to delight in what delights Him.

It's obvious from this representation, that the *whole man* is the subject of this change. There are new perceptions, new purposes, and new feelings. The mind becomes more and more enlightened, the will more submissive to the rule of right, and the affections more thoroughly purified. The apostle in his epistle to the Thessalonians

says, May the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, that your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ^{1The 5.23} The body is the subject of sanctification in various ways. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost; ^{1Cor 6,19} and therefore it is *holy* as consecrated to the service of God, and *hallowed* by the presence of God. Our bodies are also members of Jesus Christ; and in virtue of this union, they partake of the benefits of redemption, and hereafter they are to be fashioned like his glorious body. Still further, the influence of the body on the soul is so manifold for good or evil (and in our fallen state, so predominantly for evil) that no small part of the work of sanctification consists in counteracting that influence. Paul says of himself, I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection; lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. ^{1Cor 9.27} And he declares it to be one of the conditions of life, that believers should, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body. ^{Rom 8.13} The body, therefore, is sanctified not only by redeeming it from the service of sin, and consecrating it to the service of God, but also by restraining its power over the soul, making it temperate in its demands and submissive to the will of the renewed man.

As the work of sanctification extends to all our faculties, so the image of God, which sanctification is designed to impress upon the soul, includes all moral excellence. The different graces — such as love, faith, meekness, kindness, etc. — are but different manifestations of one and the same principle of goodness. It's not that justice and benevolence are the same sentiment or disposition, for they are

distinct; but the same *principle* which makes a man just, will make him benevolent. Religion, or the principle of divine life, prompts to all kinds of excellence; and in itself, it prompts as much to one as to another — just as the principle of life in plants and animals, and in the rational soul, leads to a harmonious development of the whole in all its parts. The root increases as the branches enlarge; the body grows as the several members increase in size; and judgment and memory gain strength as the other powers of the mind increase in vigor. Everything depends upon this harmonious *progress*. If the arms retained their infantile proportions, while the rest of the body advanced to maturity, deformity and helplessness would be the result. Or if judgment and feeling gained their full force, while memory and conscience remained as in infancy, the mind would be completely deranged. The same law of symmetrical development is impressed upon the life of the soul. If it exists at all, it manifests itself in all the forms of goodness.

There may be some kinds of excellence, where others are absent. But then such excellence doesn't have its source in the divine life; or in a new heart — for in its very nature, *that* includes all moral excellence. We feel it's a contradiction to say that someone is a "good" man, who even though just, is unkind — because goodness includes both justice *and* benevolence. It's no less a contradiction to say that a man is "religious" who is not honest — because religion includes honesty *as well as* piety. It's not simply intended that the word *religion* comprehends and expresses all forms of moral excellence, but that the thing meant by *religion*, or the *new man*, the *principle of grace*

or of divine life in the heart, includes within itself all kinds of goodness. Reverence, love, submission, justice, benevolence, are but different exercises of one and the same principle of *holiness*. There can be no holiness without benevolence, none without reverence, none without justice. Therefore, the man who is renewed in the spirit of his mind after the image of God, is one who has that moral excellence which expresses itself according to its different objects and occasions, in all the various graces of the Spirit.

The Scriptures give especial prominence to the *love of God* as the most comprehensive and important of all the manifestations of this inward spiritual life. We are so constituted as to take delight in objects that are suited to our nature; and the perception of qualities that are adapted to our constitution in external objects, produces satisfaction and desire. The soul rests in them as a good to be loved for its own sake; and the higher these qualities, the purer and more elevated are the affections which they excite. It is the effect of *regeneration* to enable us to perceive and love the infinite and absolute perfection of God, as comprehending all kinds of excellence, and as suited to the highest powers and most enlarged capacities of our nature. Therefore, as soon as the heart is renewed, it turns to God, and rests in His excellence as the supreme object of satisfaction and desire.

Love to God, however, is not mere satisfaction in moral excellence. It is the love of a Personal Being, who stands in the most intimate relations to ourselves, as the author of our existence, as our preserver

and ruler, as our father — who with conscious love, watches over us, protects us, supplies all our wants, holds communion with us, manifesting himself to us as He does not to the world. Feelings of dependence, obligation, and relationship enter largely into that comprehensive affection called *the love of God*. This affection is still further modified by the apprehension of the infinite wisdom and power of its object. These attributes are the proper object of admiration; and when they are infinite in degree and united with infinite goodness, they excite that wonder, admiration, reverence, and satisfaction which constitute adoration, and which find their adequate expression only in prostration and worship. There is no attribute of religion more essential to its nature than this reverence for God. Whenever heaven has been opened to the view of men, its inhabitants have been seen with their faces veiled and bowing before the throne of God. And all acceptable worship on earth, proceeds from the humble and contrite, who tremble at His word.

The exercise of these feelings of reverence and love is either (so to speak) casual, as the thoughts of God pass and repass through the soul during the busy hours of the day; or it is more prolonged, when the soul withdraws from the world, and sets itself in the presence of God, to adore his excellence, to thank him for his goodness, and to supplicate his blessing. The spirit of devotion which so pre-eminently distinguished the Redeemer, dwells in all his people. They are all devout; they all walk with God; they all feel him to be near and rejoice in his presence; and they all have communion with him in acts of private and public worship. There is no religion without this

intercourse of the soul with God, as there is no life without warmth and motion in the body. And as the body rapidly decays when dead; so the soul perishes when not in communion with God.

This love of God will manifest itself in submission and obedience. The former is a humble acquiescence in the will of God, including the perception and acknowledgment that the commands of God concerning all things *are right*, and that his dispensations are *all wise, merciful, and just*. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, religion forces upon us the conviction that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. The renewed soul filled with the assurance of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, resigns itself into his hands, saying *Your will be done*. When under the influence of this spirit, the soul is free from the discontent and misgivings which destroy the peace and aggravate the guilt of those who have no such confidence that the judge of all the earth will do right. ^{Gen 18.25}

Love to God must produce obedience, because it supposes a conformity of the soul to God, in the perception and love of what is true and right. And obedience is only the expression or outward manifestation of this conformity; just as disobedience is the evidence of a contrariety between *our* will and the will of *God*. Wherever there is reconciliation to God, or the restoration of the divine image, there must be conformity of heart and life to the will of God. It is a contradiction to say that a man is like God, or is a partaker of His nature, who does not love what God loves, and does not avoid what

He hates. Obedience is but love in action. It is but the voice, and look, and carriage which affection assumes, of necessity. For the love of God is not, as already said, mere love of excellence; it is the love of a heavenly Father; and therefore it secures obedience, not only because it supposes a congeniality of mind, if we may say so, between the people of God and God himself; but also because it is His will that we should be obedient; it's what is pleasing to him. And love is no longer love if it doesn't lead to the purpose and endeavor to give pleasure to its object. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, said our Savior, is the one who loves me. Obedience is not so much the *evidence* of love, as it is love itself made visible, or *expressed*. The habitual tenor of a man's life gives a more faithful exhibition of his state of heart, than any occasional gush of feeling, or any mere verbal professions. And where the tenor of the life is not in conformity with the will of God, there the heart must be in opposition to that will; and on the other hand, wherever there is love, there must be obedience.

It would be out of analogy with the order of things as established by God, if the exercises of the spiritual life were not attended by peace and joy. Happiness is so intimately associated with these exercises that the apostle says, To be spiritually minded is life and peace.^{Rom 8.6} Excellence and enjoyment are blended in inseparable union, so that all right emotions and affections are pleasurable. And this pleasure is in kind, if not in degree, proportionate to the dignity of the powers from whose exercise they flow. The *senses* afford the lowest kind of happiness; then, in an ascending scale, the *social*

affections; then the *intellectual powers*; then the *moral emotions*, and then the *religious affections*. The kind of enjoyment which attend these latter affections, is felt to be purer and more elevated, more satisfying and better suited to our nature, than that which flows from any other source. Hence the Scriptures ascribe to communion with God, a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, and a peace which passes all understanding. Joy, therefore, is one of the fruits of the Spirit; it is one of the accompaniments and evidences of spiritual life; it is a healthful affusion;¹⁴ it is the oil of gladness which the Spirit pours over the renewed soul, to invigorate its exercises, brighten its visage, and make it active in the service and praise of God.

The image of God, after which the soul is renewed, consists in moral excellence. And as moral excellence means that state of mind which causes a man to feel and act right under all circumstances, it is impossible that those who have correct views and feelings in regard to God, should not feel and act correctly in regard to their fellow men. Those whom the Bible designates as *good men*, are benevolent and just, no less than devout. The comprehensive statement of our duty towards our fellow men, is found in the command, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The love here intended is that disposition which leads us to regard our neighbor with respect and kindness, and to seek to do him good. This love is long-suffering and kind; it does not envy the happiness of others but rejoices in their welfare. It is not proud, nor does it behave itself unseemly. It does not seek its own. It doesn't rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the

truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things. ^{1Cor 13:7}
Without this love, all professions of piety, all gifts, all outward acts of self-denial or charity, are worthless. It belongs *essentially* to the Christian character. For as self-love belongs to our nature as men, prompting us to the pursuit of our own happiness, so benevolence belongs to the nature of the new man, prompting us to seek the happiness of others. A *new man* means a *good man*, one who is like God — holy, just, benevolent, and merciful.

This meek, kind, trustful temper, which religion never fails to produce, is of course variously modified by the various characters of individuals, and by the relations of life. It is no part of the teaching of the Bible that we must regard all men with the same feelings. While it inculcates benevolence towards all men, it makes provision for the peculiar and closer relations in which men stand to each other as members of one family, or one society. And the same principle of religion which produces this general benevolence, secures the exercise of all the affections which belong to the various relations of life. It causes us to render obedience to whom obedience is due, fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due. It makes men, in their intercourse with their equals, to be respectful, considerate, and amiable; and in their conduct to their inferiors, it makes them condescending, just, and kind. ¹⁵

It cannot be too well considered that these social virtues are essential to true religion. The people of God are those who are like God; but God, as we have seen, is just, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in

goodness and truth. Therefore, those who are dishonest, unkind, proud, revengeful, or deceitful, are not His people; they don't bear the heavenly image, and have never been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Let no man deceive himself with the hope that though a bad parent, child, or neighbor, he may be a good Christian. A Christian is like Christ.

Another form in which a renewed heart cannot fail to manifest itself, is in *self-denial*. If any man will come after me, said the Savior, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. The necessity of self-denial arises partly from the fact that the gratification of our own wishes is often inconsistent with the good of others; and partly from the fact that so many of our desires and passions are inordinate or evil. The rule prescribed by the gospel is that we are not to please ourselves, but everyone must please his neighbor, for his good unto edification, even as Christ did not please himself; ^{Rom 15.2-3} though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that we, through his poverty, might be rich. ^{2Cor 8.9} The daily intercourse of life furnishes constant occasion for the exercise of this kind of self-denial. He who has the same mind that was in Christ, instead of being selfish, is ready to defer his own advantage to that of others, to give up his own gratification, and even his own rights for the good of others. If meat causes his brother to stumble, he will not eat meat while the world lasts. ^{1Cor 8.13} To the Jews, he becomes as a Jew, that he may gain the Jews. To the weak, he becomes as weak, that he may gain the weak. ^{1Cor 9.20, 22} He does not live for himself. His own interest is not the main end of his pursuit. As a disinterested regard for the good of

others pre-eminently distinguished the Redeemer, it characterizes all his followers; for God has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son. ^{Rom 8.29}

The call for self-denial arising from the corruption of our nature, is even more frequent. In consequence of the fall, the senses have attained an undue influence over the soul. They are incessant in their demands, and they become more importunate the more they are indulged. It is inconsistent with reason to yield ourselves to the power of these lower principles of our nature — for reason itself teaches us that if a man is governed by his body, he is the servant of a slave. But if even a rational man feels bound to subject the body to the mind, the religious man cannot be sensual. Those who are Christians have mortified the flesh with its affections and lusts; they keep their bodies in subjection. ^{Gal 5.24}

What belongs to the body is, in a certain sense, external; but the evil dispositions of the heart are in more intimate connection with the soul. Pride, vanity, envy, malice, the love of self are more formidable foes than mere bodily appetites. They are stronger, more enduring, and more capable of deceit. As these dispositions are deeply seated in our nature, putting off the old man which is corrupt, or the destruction of these unholy principles, is the most difficult of all Christian duties, and renders the believer's life a perpetual conflict.

The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that he cannot do the things that he would. ^{Gal 5.17} In this conflict, however, the better principle is habitually, though not uniformly,

victorious; for the children of God don't walk after the flesh, but after the spirit. Rom 8.1

It appears, then, even from this short survey, that true Christians are renewed in the image of God so as to be holy; they love God; they rest with satisfaction on His perfections; they acquiesce in his will; and they rejoice in their relation to him as his creatures and children. They are habitually devout, and have fellowship with the Father of their spirits, and with Jesus Christ his Son. They are obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to their former lusts, but as He that called them is holy, so are they holy in all manner of conduct. ^{1Pet 1.15} As they bear the image of a just and merciful God, they are honest and benevolent towards their fellow men, not seeking their own, but the good of others. And as this victory over themselves, and this conformity to the image of God, cannot be obtained without conflict and self-denial, they keep up a constant opposition to the more subtle evils of the heart.

Some may be ready to say that if *this* is religion, then no man is religious. It is certainly true that many are called, and few chosen. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. We must take our idea of religion from the Bible, and not from the lives of professors. It cannot be denied that the Bible makes religion to consist in love to God and man. Nor can it be questioned that the love of God will manifest itself in reverence, devotion, and obedience, and the love of men in benevolence and justice. And our own conscience tells us that no external forms, no

outward professions, no diligence in religious services, can entitle us to the character of Christians, unless we are thus devout and obedient towards God; thus just and benevolent towards our fellow men; and thus pure and self-denying as regards ourselves. But while it is certain that these traits are all essential to the Christian character, it is not asserted that all Christians are alike. There is as much diversity in their characters as Christians, as there is in their bodily appearance, their mental powers, or their social dispositions. But in the midst of this endless variety, all men have the same features, the same mental faculties, and the same social affections. So too, all Christians, however they may differ in the strength or combination of the Christian graces, are all led by the Spirit, and all produce the fruits of the Spirit.

Having given this brief outline of the nature of true religion, it is proper to say a few words as to its *necessity*. It should be ever borne in mind that the necessity of holiness is absolute. With regard to other things, some, though desirable, are not essential; and others, though essential under ordinary circumstances, are not universally and absolutely necessary. But holiness is necessary in such a sense that *without it*, salvation is impossible — because salvation principally consists in this very transformation of the heart. Jesus is a Savior because he saves his people from their sins. *Therefore, those who are not sanctified, are not saved.* The doctrine that a man may live in sin, and still be in a state of salvation, is as much a contradiction, as to say that a man may be ill, when he's healthy. *A state of salvation is a state of holiness.* The two things are

inseparable — because salvation is not mere redemption from the *penalty* of sin, but deliverance from its *power*. It is freedom from bondage to the appetites of the body and the evil passions of the heart; it is an introduction into the favor and fellowship of God; and the restoration of the divine image to the soul, so that it loves God and delights in his service. Salvation, therefore, is always begun on earth. *Truly, truly, I say to you, he that believes in me has eternal life.* ^{Joh 6.47} This is the language of our Savior. *To be spiritually minded is life; to be carnally minded is death.* ^{Rom 8.6} No delusion is more inexcusable (because none is more directly opposed to every doctrine of the Bible) than the idea that a state of grace is consistent with a life of sin. Without holiness no man can see God. ^{Heb 12.14} Whatever our ecclesiastical connections may be, whatever our privileges or professions, if we are not holy in heart and life; if we are not habitually governed by a regard to the will of God; if we do not delight in communion with him, and desire conformity to his image; if we are not led by the Spirit and do not exhibit the love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance which that Spirit always produces ^{Gal 5.22-23} — then we are not religious men, nor are we in a state of salvation.

The Bible knows nothing of proud, selfish, covetous, impure Christians. Christians are partakers of a holy calling; they are washed, and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; they are saints, the sanctified in Christ Jesus; they mind spiritual things; they have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; they are poor in spirit, meek, pure in heart,

merciful; they hunger and thirst after righteousness — not that they have already attained, or are already perfect; but they follow after, that they may apprehend that for which they are also apprehended by Christ Jesus; forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching out to those things which are before, they press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ^{Phi 3.12-13} Their conversation is in heaven; from which they also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able to subdue all things unto himself. ^{Phi 3.20-21}

Again, as God is holy, it is necessary that his people should be holy. There can be no communion without concord, or congeniality. If one loves what another hates, approves what another condemns, desires what another rejects, there can be no fellowship between them. What concord has Christ with Belial; or what fellowship has light with darkness? ^{2Cor 6.14} Therefore, so long as we are what God disapproves of; so long as we don't love what he loves, there can be no fellowship between Him and us. Hence Christ says, Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and so long as this prevails, it is impossible that we should enjoy His presence. As God is the only adequate portion of the soul; as His favor and fellowship are essential to our happiness; as heaven consists in seeing, loving, and serving God — it is plain that unless we are sanctified, we cannot be saved. We cannot enjoy the society, the employments, or the pleasures of the people of God

above, if we take no delight in them *here*. The necessity of holiness, therefore, arises out of the very nature of God; and consequently, it is absolute and unchangeable.

We know also that holiness is the end of redemption. Christ gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and that it should be holy and without blemish. He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. The object of redemption is not attained in the case of those who *remain* in sin; in other words, they are not redeemed. Therefore, it subverts the whole Gospel, and makes the death of Christ of no effect, to suppose that redemption and continuance in sin are compatible. The whole design and purpose of the mission and sufferings of the Savior would be frustrated, if his people were not made partakers of his holiness. For the glory of God is promoted in them and by them *only so far as they are made holy*; and the recompense of the Redeemer is his bringing his people into conformity to his own image, so that he may be the first-born among many brethren. Every child of God feels that the charm and glory of redemption is deliverance from sin and conformity to God. This is the crown of righteousness, the prize of the high calling of God, the exaltation and blessedness for which he longs, and suffers, and prays. To tell him that he may be saved without being made holy, is to confound all his ideas of salvation, and to crush all his hopes. The nature of salvation, the character of God, the declarations of his word, the design of redemption, all concur to prove that holiness is absolutely and indispensably necessary. So that, whatever we may be, or whatever we may have, if

we are not holy, we are not the children of God, nor the heirs of His kingdom.

Section II. The means of sanctification.

The attainment of holiness is often treated, even by Christian writers, as a mere question of morals, or at most of natural religion. Men are directed to control by the force of reason, their evil propensities; to set in array before the mind the motives to virtuous living, and to strengthen the will by acts of self-restraint. Conscience is summoned to sanction the dictates of reason, or to warn the sinner of the consequences of transgression. The doctrines of the presence and providence of God, and of future retribution, are more or less relied upon to prevent the indulgence of sin, and to stimulate to the practice of virtue. Special directions are given to cultivate virtuous habits, or to correct those which are evil.

As we are rational beings and were meant to be governed by reason in opposition to appetite and passion, there is much that is true and important in such disquisitions on the practice of virtue. But as we are depraved beings, destitute of any recuperative power in ourselves, such rules and the efforts to which they lead, by themselves, must be ineffectual. God has endowed the body with a restorative energy which enables it to throw off what is noxious to the system, and to heal the wounds which accident or malice may have inflicted. But when the system itself is deranged, instead of correcting what is amiss, it aggravates what would otherwise be a mere temporary disorder. And if the evil is checked in one part by

external means, it re-appears in another. Though you amputate a decaying limb, the remaining part may soon exhibit symptoms of mortification. So long as the system is deranged, such means are mere palliatives, concealing or diverting the evil, but leaving the source of it untouched. It is no less true that so long as the heart is unrenewed, all that reason and conscience can do is of little avail. They may obstruct the stream, or divert it into secret channels, but they cannot reach the fountain. Since the fall, we retain reason, the power of choice, conscience, the social affections, a sense of justice, fear, shame, etc.; so much may be done by a skillful management of these principles of action, towards producing proper conduct and even great amiability and worth of character. But by these means, it is impossible to call into existence right views and feelings towards God and our neighbor, or to eradicate the selfishness, pride, and other forms of evil by which our nature is corrupted. A man may be brought by reason and conscience, to change his *conduct*, but not to change his *heart*. A sense of duty may force him to give alms to a man he hates, but it cannot change hatred into love. The desire for happiness may induce him to engage externally in the service of God, but it can't make that service a delight. The affections don't obey the dictates of reason, nor the commands of conscience. They may be measurably restrained in their manifestations, but they cannot be changed in their nature. They follow their own law. They delight in what is suited to the disposition of the one who exercises them. Holding up to them what they *ought* to delight in, cannot secure their devotion.

This is not meant to depreciate reason and conscience, but it is necessary that their true province should be known, so that we may not rely upon inadequate means in our efforts to become holy. Though Scripture and experience teach us that our own unaided powers are insufficient to bring us to the knowledge and love of God, the rules which reason suggests for the culture of moral excellence, are far from being destitute of value for the *renewed* man. It is no doubt of importance that we be acquainted with the counsels of the wise on this subject, and that we should habituate ourselves to the vigilant use of all these subordinate means of improvement. We must remember, however, that it is not by the strength of our own purposes, nor by the force of moral considerations, nor by any rules of discipline, that the life of God in the soul can be either produced or sustained.

One class of men place their chief reliance for moral improvement upon reason and conscience. Another, perhaps larger class, relies upon means which are falsely assumed to have, by virtue of the appointment of God, an inherent efficacy for that purpose; though they have no tendency in themselves to produce holiness. Such are not only the ablutions, pilgrimages, and penances of the heathen, but the multiplied rites of corrupt Christian churches. Sprinkling the body with consecrated water, the repetition of forms of prayer, attending to religious services that are not understood, anointing with oil, the imposition of hands, receiving the holy sacraments without faith — these are supposed to convey grace to the soul. Great reliance is placed on retirement from the world, on praying at

particular times or places, or in a particular posture, and on the whole routine of ascetic discipline. With what laborious and unavailing diligence these means of destroying sin have been employed, the history of the church gives melancholy evidence. Even in the days of the apostles, the disposition to rely on such means for attaining holiness had begun to manifest itself. Even then, there were men who commanded others to abstain from meats, who forbade marriage, who said do not taste, do not touch, do not handle. These things, says the apostle, indeed have a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and in neglecting and dishonoring the body, and yet they only served to satisfy the flesh. Col 2.21-23

The Scriptures teach us a different doctrine. They teach that believers are so united to Christ, that they are not only partakers of the merit of his death, but also of his Holy Spirit, which dwells in them as a principle of life, bringing them more and more into conformity with the image of God, and working in them both to will and to do, according to His own good pleasure. They teach that so long as men are under the law (that is, bound to satisfy its demands as the ground of their acceptance with God) and are governed by a legal spirit, or a mere sense of duty and fear of punishment, they are in the condition of slaves; incapable of right feelings towards God, or of producing the fruits of holiness. But when they are freed from the law by the death of Christ, in the sense stated above, their whole relation to God is changed. They are no longer slaves, but children. Being united to Christ in his death, they are partakers of his life; and by virtue of this union, they bring forth fruit unto God. They are

thereafter led by the Spirit which dwells in them; and this Spirit is a source of life not only to the soul but also to the body. For if the Spirit of him that raised Christ from the dead, dwells in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our bodies, by his Spirit that dwells in us. ^{Rom 8.11} The doctrine of sanctification, therefore, as taught in the Bible, is that we are made holy not by the force of conscience, nor of moral motives, nor by acts of discipline, but by being united to Christ so as to become reconciled to God, and partakers of the Holy Ghost. Christ is made to us sanctification as well as justification. ^{1Cor 1.30} He not only frees from the penalty of the law, but he makes holy. Therefore, according to the gospel, there is no such thing as sanctification, without or before justification. Those who are out of Christ are under the power, as well as under the condemnation of sin. And those who are in Christ are not only free from condemnation, but are also delivered from the dominion of sin.

The nature of the union between Christ and his people, on which so much depends, is confessedly mysterious. Paul having said, *We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*, immediately adds, *This is a great mystery*. ^{Eph 5.32} It is in vain, therefore, to attempt to bring this subject down to the level of our comprehension. The mode in which God is present and operates throughout the universe, is an impenetrable secret to us. We cannot even understand how our own souls are present and operate in the bodies which they occupy. We need not, then, expect to comprehend the mode in which Christ dwells by his Spirit in the hearts of his people. The fact that such a union exists is clearly revealed; its effects are

explicitly stated, and its nature is set forth as far as it can be made known, by the most striking illustrations. In his intercessory prayer, our Savior said, I pray that they all may be one, as you Father are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us. I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one. ^{Joh 17.21-23} He that keeps his commandments, says the apostle, dwells in Him, and He in him; and hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us. ^{1Joh 3.24} If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; but if Christ is in you, the body (adds the apostle) may die, but the soul shall live. ^{Rom 8.9-11} Don't you know, asks Paul, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ^{1Cor 6.19} And to the same effect, Don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ^{1Cor 3.16}

The Scriptures are filled with this doctrine. The great promise of the Old Testament in connection with the advent of the Messiah, was that the Holy Spirit would then be abundantly communicated to men. Christ is said to have redeemed us, that we might receive this promised Spirit. ^{Gal 3.13-14} And the only evidence recognized by the apostles, of a participation in the benefits of redemption, was the participation of the Holy Ghost, manifesting itself either in the extraordinary powers which He then communicated, or in those lovely fruits of holiness which never fail to mark His presence.

The effects ascribed to this union, as already stated, are an interest in the merits of Christ in order for our *justification*, and the indwelling

of his Spirit in order for our *sanctification*. Its nature is variously illustrated. It is compared to that union which subsists between a representative and those for whom he acts. In this view, Adam is said to be like Christ and Christ is said to be the second Adam; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. ^{1Cor 15.22} This idea is also presented whenever Christ is said to have died for his sheep, or in their place; or when they are said to have died with him, his death being virtually their death, satisfying the demands of justice on their behalf, and redeeming them from the curse of the law. It is compared to the union between the head and members of the same body. The meaning of this illustration is by no means exhausted by saying that Christ governs his people, or that there is a community of feeling and interest between them. The main idea is that there is a community of life; that the same Spirit dwells in him and in them. The body is everywhere animated by one soul, which makes it one, and communicates a common life to all its parts. And so the Holy Ghost, who dwells in Christ, is communicated by him to all his people. He makes them in a peculiar sense, one with him, and one among themselves; and He imparts to all, that life which has its seat and source in him. For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ^{1Cor 12.12-13} Another illustration, having the same import, is employed by Christ when he says, I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him, brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. ^{Joh 15.5} As the branches are so united to the vine as to partake of its

life and to be absolutely dependent upon it, believers are so united to Christ as to partake of his life, and to be absolutely dependent on him. The Holy Spirit communicated by him to them, is the principle of life and fruitfulness in them.

Christ and his people are one. He is the foundation, they are the building. He is the vine, they are the branches. He is the head, they are the body. Because he lives, they shall live also; for it is not them who live, but Christ that lives in them. ^{Gal 2.20} The Holy Spirit, as Jesus said to his disciples, dwells with you and shall be in you. He is to them not only the source of spiritual life, but of all its manifestations. They are baptized by the Spirit; ^{Luk 3.16} they are born of the Spirit; ^{Joh 3.5} they are called spiritual, because the Spirit of God dwells in them; ^{1Cor 3.16} whereas, the unregenerate are called natural or sensual, “not having the Spirit.” ^{Jud 10} Believers are sanctified by the Spirit; ^{1Cor 6.11} they are led by the Spirit; ^{Rom 8.14} live in the Spirit; ^{Gal 5.25} they are strengthened by the Spirit; ^{Eph 3.16} they are filled with the Spirit. ^{Eph 5.18} By the Spirit they mortify sin; ^{Rom 8.13} through the Spirit, they wait for the hope of righteousness; ^{Gal 5.5} they have access to God by the Spirit; ^{Eph 2.18} they pray and sing in the Spirit. ^{1Cor 14.15} The Spirit is a source of knowledge to them, ^{Eph 1.17} of joy ^{1The 1.6} of love, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. ^{Gal 5.22} This doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is so wrought into the texture of the Gospel as to be absolutely essential to it. It ceases to be the Gospel if we abstract from it the great truth that the Spirit of God, as the purchase and gift of Christ, is ever present with his people, guiding their inward exercises and their outward conduct,

and bringing them at last, without spot or blemish, to the purity and blessedness of heaven.

The secret of holy living lies in this doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ. This is not only the ground of his hope of pardon, but the source of the strength by which he dies to sin and lives to righteousness. It is by being rooted and grounded in Christ that he is strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, and is enabled to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth and height of the mystery of redemption, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge and is filled with all the fulness of God. It is this doctrine which sustains him under all his trials, and enables him to triumph over all his enemies; for it is not he that lives, but Christ that lives in him, giving him grace sufficient for his day, and purifying him unto himself, as one of his peculiar people, zealous of good works.

As union with Christ is the source of spiritual life, the means by which that life is to be maintained and promoted, are all related to this doctrine and derive all their efficacy from it. Thus we are said to be purified by faith, ^{Act 15.9} to be sanctified by faith, ^{Act 26.18} to live by faith, ^{Gal 2.20} to be saved by faith. ^{Eph 2.8} Faith has this important agency because it is the bond of our union with Christ. It not only gives us the right to plead his merits for our justification, but it makes us partakers of his Holy Spirit. Christ has promised that all who come to him shall receive the Water of Life, which the apostle tells us, means the Holy Spirit. It is by faith, and in the persuasion of

our consequent union with Christ, that we have confidence to draw near to God and to open our souls to the sanctifying influence of His love. It is by faith that we receive of his fulness and grace for grace. It is by faith that we look to him for strength to overcome temptations and to discharge our duties. It is by faith that we receive those exceeding great and precious promises, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature.

All Christians know from experience that faith in Christ is the source of their holiness and peace. When beset with temptations to despondency or sin, if they look to him for support, they are conscious of a strength to resist, or to endure, which no effort of will and no influence of motives ever could impart. When they draw near to God as the members of Christ, they have freedom of access and they experience a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. When pressed down by afflictions, if they remember that they are one with Him who suffered for them, leaving them an example, they rejoice in their tribulations, knowing that if they suffer, they will also reign with him. ^{2Tim 2.12}

Moreover, by virtue of our union with Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit as the source of spiritual life; to maintain that life, we must avoid everything which may provoke the Spirit to withdraw from us. The Bible teaches us that the Spirit may be grieved; that his influences may be quenched; that in judgment, God often withdraws these influences from those who thus offend Him. ^{Psa 51.11} Evil thoughts, unholy tempers, acts of transgression are to be avoided not

merely as sins, but as offenses against the Holy Spirit. We must remember that to defile the soul with sin, or the body by intemperance or impurity, is sacrilege, because we are the members of Christ, and our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, right thoughts, just purposes, holy desires are to be cherished, not only as right in themselves, but as proceeding from that heavenly agent on whom we are dependent for sanctification.

This is a very different thing from opposing sin and cultivating right feelings on mere moral considerations, and in dependence on our own strength. This may be what the world calls *morality*, but it is not what the Bible calls *religion*. Such considerations ought to have, and ever *will* have their due weight with the Christian; but he doesn't depend on them in his efforts to become holy, nor does he rely on his own resources. The life which he leads is by faith in Jesus Christ; and it is by constant reference to the Holy Spirit, and dependence on *Him* that that life is maintained. For it is as inconsistent with the religion of the Gospel, to suppose that we can make ourselves holy by our own strength, as that we can be justified by our own works.

It is principally through the efficacy of prayer that we receive the communications of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is not a mere instinct of a dependent nature, seeking help from the author of its being. Nor is it to be viewed simply as a natural expression of faith and desire, or as a mode of communion with the Father of our spirits — but it is also to be regarded as the appointed means of obtaining the Holy Ghost. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how

much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. ^{Luk 11.13} Hence we are urged to be constant and importunate in prayer, praying especially for those communications of divine influence by which the life of God in the soul is maintained and promoted.

The doctrine that the Holy Spirit works in the people of God both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, is not inconsistent with the diligent use of all rational and scriptural means, on our part, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. For though the mode of the Spirit's influence is inscrutable, it is still the influence of a rational being on a rational subject. It is described as an enlightening, teaching, persuading process; all these terms suppose a rational subject, rationally affected. The indwelling of the Spirit in the people of God, therefore, does not supersede their own agency. *He acts by leading them to act.* Thus we are commanded to do, and in fact we must do, what He is said to do for us. We believe, even though faith is of the operation of God; we repent, even though repentance is the gift of Christ; we love, even though love, gentleness, goodness and all other graces are the fruits of the Spirit. The work of sanctification is carried on by our being thus led under this divine influence, to exercise right dispositions and feelings. For the law of our nature, which connects an increase of strength with the repeated exercise of any of our powers, is not suspended with regard to the holy disposition of the renewed soul. Philosophers say that the vibrations imparted to the atmosphere by the utterance of a word never cease. However this may be, it is certain that every pious

emotion strengthens the principle of piety, and leaves the soul permanently better. The good derived from that influence, or from those services which call our love, faith, or gratitude into exercise, is not transient as the exercises themselves are. Far from it. One hour's communion with God produces an impression never to be effaced; it renders the soul forever less susceptible to evil and more susceptible to good. And as the Holy Spirit is ever exciting the soul to the exercise of holiness, and bringing it into communion with God, He thus renders it more and more holy, and better fitted for the unchanging and perfect holiness of heaven.

It is principally by the contemplation of the truth, the worship of God, and the discharge of duty, that these holy exercises are called into being. All thought and affection suppose an object on which they terminate, and which when presented, tends to evoke these exercises. We cannot fear God unless his holiness and power are present to the mind; we cannot love him except in view of his excellence and goodness; we cannot believe, except in contemplation of his word, nor hope, unless in view of his promises. As these affections suppose their appropriate objects, so these objects tend to excite the affections. If it weren't for our depravity, they never could be brought into view without the corresponding affection rising to meet them. And notwithstanding our depravity, their tendency which results from their inherent nature remains. And as that depravity is corrected or removed by the Holy Spirit, these objects exert on the soul their appropriate influence. We are therefore said to be sanctified by the truth; ^{Joh 17.19} to be made clean through the word of

Christ; ^{Joh 15.3} to be born again by the word of truth; ^{Jas 1.18} and to be changed into the image of God by beholding his glory. ^{2Cor 3.18}

It is most unreasonable to expect to be conformed to the image of God, unless the truth concerning God is made to operate upon the mind, often and continuously. How can a heart that is filled with thoughts and cares about the world, and especially one which is often moved to evil by the thoughts or sight of sin, expect that the affections which correspond to the holiness, goodness, or greatness of God should gather strength within it? How can the love of Christ increase in the bosoms of those who hardly ever think of him or of his work? This cannot be without a change in the very nature of things. And therefore, we cannot make progress in holiness unless we devote much time to reading, hearing, and meditating upon the word of God, which is the truth by which we are sanctified. The more this truth is brought before the mind, the more we commune with it — entering into its import, applying it to our own case, appropriating its principles, appreciating its motives, rejoicing in its promises, trembling at its threatenings, rising by its influence from what is seen and temporal, to what is unseen and eternal — the more we may expect to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so as to approve and love whatever is holy, just, and good. Men distinguished for their piety, have ever been men of meditation as well as prayer. They have been accustomed to withdraw the mind from the influence of the world with its thousand joys and sorrows, and to bring it under the influence of the doctrines, precepts, and promises of the word of God.

Besides the contemplation of the truth, the worship of God is an important means of growing in grace. It not only includes the exercise and expression of all pious feelings, which are necessarily strengthened by the exercise, but it is the appointed means of holding communion with God, and receiving the communications of his grace. Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall walk and not be weary, they shall run and not faint. ^{Isa 40.31} Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they will be still praising you. They will go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. ^{Psa 84.4, 7} This is a matter of experience as well as revelation. The people of God have ever found in the private, social, and public worship of the Father of their spirits, the chief means of renewing their spiritual strength. The sanctuary is the temple of God on earth, whose services are preparatory to those of the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ^{2Cor 5.1} It is here, too, that the sacraments have their appropriate place, as means of grace. They are to us what the sacrifices and rites of the old dispensation were to the Israelites. They exhibit and seal the truth and promises of God, and convey to those who worthily receive them, the blessings which they represent. The Christian, therefore, who is desirous to increase in the knowledge and love of God, will be a faithful attendant on all the appointed forms and occasions of divine worship. He will be much in his closet; he will be punctual in the sanctuary and at the table of the Lord. He will seek opportunities for fellowship with God, as a friend seeks intercourse with his friend. And the more he can enjoy of this communion, the better prepared he will be for that perfect fellowship

with the Father of lights, which constitutes the blessedness of heaven.

Finally, to *be* good, we must *do* good. It has been falsely said that action is the whole of oratory, and as falsely supposed that action is the whole of religion. There is no eloquence in action except as it is expressive of thought and feeling; and there is no religion in outward acts, except as they are informed and guided by a pious spirit. It is only by maintaining such a spirit, that external works can have any significance or value. It is perhaps one of the evil tendencies of our age, to push religion out of doors; to allow her no home but the street or public assembly; to withhold from her all food except the excitement of loud professions and external manifestations. This is to destroy her power. It is to cut her off from the source of her strength, and to transform the meek and holy visitor from heaven, into the noisy and bustling inhabitant of the earth. It is so much easier to be religious outwardly than inwardly — to be active in church duties, than to keep the heart with all diligence — that we are in danger of preferring the *form* of religion to its *power*. The same love of excitement and a desire to be busy, which make men active in worldly pursuits, may also make them active in religious exercises, without changing their character.

But if there is danger on *this* side, there is quite as much on the *other*. Although religion doesn't consist in outward acts, it always produces them. Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how does

the love of God dwell in him? ^{1Joh 3.17} The love of God can no more fail to produce obedience to His commands, than a mother's love can fail to produce watchfulness and care for her infant. Therefore, that man's religion is vain which expends itself in exercises that relate exclusively to his own salvation. And doubtless many Christians go halting all their days, because they confine their attention too much to themselves. It is only by the harmonious exercise of all the graces — of faith and love towards God, and of justice and benevolence towards men — that the health of the soul can be maintained or promoted. It is not merely because the exercise of benevolence strengthens the principle of benevolence, that doing good tends to make men better. But God has ordained that the one who waters, shall also be watered himself. He distills his grace on those who labor for the temporal and spiritual benefit of their fellow men, *and* who follow the example of the blessed Redeemer, walking with God while they go about doing good.

True religion as we find it described in the Bible, is then neither an external show, nor a fitful gush of feeling. It is a permanent, spontaneous, and progressive principle of spiritual life, influencing the whole man, and producing all the fruits of righteousness. It is not any one good disposition, but the root and spring of all right feelings and actions, manifesting itself in love and obedience towards God, in justice and benevolence towards man, and in the proper government of ourselves. This divine life can neither be obtained nor continued by any mere efforts of reason or conscience, or by any superstitious observances; but it flows from our union with Christ, who causes his

Holy Spirit to dwell in all his members. In order to promote this divine life, it is our business to avoid everything which has a tendency to grieve the Spirit of all grace, and to do everything by which His sacred influence on the heart may be cherished. It is by this influence that we are sanctified; for it leads us to exercise all holy dispositions in the contemplation of the truth, in the worship of God, and in the discharge of all our relative duties.

Summary

This unpretending volume, designed for the use of educated youth, was written with the view of impressing on its readers those great truths of revelation which are immediately connected with practical religion. We have designed to convince them that all skepticism as to the divine authority of the Scriptures is inexcusable, inasmuch as the Bible brings with it its own credentials. It makes such a revelation of the character of God, of the rule of duty, and of the plan of salvation, as will challenge immediate assent and submission to their truth and goodness. It sets forth the Redeemer as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, in whom the glory of God is so revealed, that those who refuse to recognize him as their God and Savior refuse their confidence in and obedience to infinite excellence. In order that every mouth may be stopped, the Bible thus replete with evidence of its divine origin, is confirmed by all kinds of adequate proofs from miracles, prophecy, and history, that it is indeed the word of God.

The divine authority of the Scriptures being established, the great question to be decided by everyone by whom they are known is, *What do they teach as to the plan of salvation and the rule of duty?* It has been our design to aid the reader in answering this question for himself; to show him that the Bible teaches that we are all sinners, and that being sinners, we have lost the favor of God and are

unable to effect our own redemption. When we feel that this is true with regard to ourselves, we are convinced of sin, and are irresistibly led to ask, *What must we do to be saved?* In answer to this question the Scriptures set forth Jesus Christ as born of a woman, made under the law, satisfying its demands, dying the just for the unjust, rising again from the dead, and ascending up on high, where he ever lives to make intercession for us. They teach us that it is not for anything we have done or experienced, but solely for what Christ has done for us, that we are justified in the sight of God. And that in order to be saved through Christ, we must accept him as our Savior, not striving to establish our own righteousness, but submitting to the righteousness of God. Those who thus *believe*, at the same time *repent*; that is, they turn from sin to God, through Jesus Christ. They are now His followers, and declare themselves to be such by confessing him before the world, and by devoutly attending to those ordinances which he has appointed to be a means of acknowledging our allegiance to him, and of communicating his grace to us.

The Scriptures further teach that our work has but begun when we have thus renounced the world and joined ourselves to the Lord. The spiritual life commenced in regeneration is carried on by the Holy Spirit who dwells in all the people of God, by teaching them to look to Jesus Christ, as their living head, for all those supplies of grace and all that protection which their circumstances require. They are thus washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And being made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light, they will at last be admitted into God's blissful

presence, and enjoy the full communications of His grace and love forever and ever.

THE END.

Notes

[[←1](#)]

Joh 10.38; Act 8.6, 13; 15.12; 19.11; Gal 3.5; Heb 2.3-4.

[←2]

“ill-deserts” or “just deserts” are the bad things we deserve to suffer for our offenses. – WHG

[←3]

Cavilling: raising trivial or irrelevant objections to avoid resolving an issue. – WHG

[←4.]

Turpitude: a corrupt, depraved, or degenerate act or practice. –
WHG

[←5]

An interest: a stake or share in the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ. – WHG

[←6]

Wilberforce's *Correspondence*.

[←7]

Rev 22.11, is probably no exception to this remark, as the text in that passage is uncertain.

[←8]

Rom 3.20; Gal 2.16; 3.11; 5.14.

[←9.]

There is no separate word in the original corresponding to the word *together*, which is not to be understood of the union of believers with one another in the participation of these blessings. It is their union with Christ that the passage asserts.

[[←10](#)]

Eph 2.8, Col 2.12.

[[←11](#)]

Joh 1.14; Rom 8.29, 25; Heb 8.1; 7.25; 1Pet 1.8; Eph 3.8.

[[←12](#)]

Rom 10.3 and 11.20.

[←13]

Mat 6:11; Joh 6.35, 50, 51; 1Cor 11.26.

[←14.]

Affusion: baptizing by pouring water on the head; here it alludes to anointing Aaron with oil, Exo 29.7. – WHG

[←15]

Condescending here doesn't mean patronizing, but treating all others as worthy of our respect. – WHG